Composer Kenton Coe, Cherokee Dance, Outdoor Drama, Contemporary West Virginia Painters

NOW AND THEN

Center for Appalachian Studies and Services/Institute for Appalachian Affairs
East Tennessee State University

Appalachian Art Folk & Fine

Special color edition

Stories, Poetry, Photos, Reviews

Music by Norman Blake

In Search of the Appalachian Quilt by Laurel Horton

Mask with cornhusks by Sammie Nicely, Russellville, Tenn., 1986.

$3.50

"Nude Descending the Staircase," multiple exposure photograph by Michael Northrup, Parkersburg, W.Va., 1988. This work, now appearing in the West Virginia Juried Exhibition in Charleston, W.Va., is intended as an homage to Marcel Duchamp's painting by the same title. Northrup, who received a masters in fine art from the Art Institute of Chicago, teaches photography at Shepherd College in Shepherdstown, W.Va. His work has most recently appeared in "The Assembled Image," an exhibition in Charlottesville, Va.

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— Dudley Cocke

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Now And Then Magazine

Art Folk and Fine

Tourists don't hear much about the Manhattan Project up on the Blue Ridge Parkway, although it's just as much a part of Appalachia's history as the region's pioneer past. Instead, visitors see replicas of small farmsteads bounded by split rail fences, they walk by weathered barns and they wander through small, poorly lit log cabins. In those cabins are weaving looms and handmade tools, simply crafted furniture and quilts.

Thanks to the tourist industry, this bucolic image gets generalized to the entire region of Appalachia. And that image of Appalachia is inextricably tied to the folk arts, especially crafts. As Laurel Horton observes in her essay"In Search of the Appalachian Quilt," (on page 19) those crafts often serve as sacraments in a cult that worships the image of a perfect American past. In this past, mountaineers felled trees and hewed logs to build their homes, carded, spun and wove wool to make their clothes and fashioned the farm implements they used to raise their own food. They were self-sufficient, rugged individualists. In a fast-moving, mobile, highly specialized world filled with machine-made products stamped out of man-made materials, this image of a stable past that Appalachian art and craft often represents is very reassuring, even therapeutic.

The accuracy of this view of the past is open to question. As a folklorist, I often interview people who are old enough to have lived a subsistence life on small farmsteads in their youth. What they mourn most about the past is certainly not the hard, unending work that went into survival year in and year out. What they complain about is that you used to be able to depend on your neighbor and today, you're on your own. So much for self-sufficiency

Of course the tourist industry is not solely responsible for the strong association between Appalachia and folk art and craft. Bernice Stevens details in her article on the craft revival movement (on page 34) how various missionaries and educators came to the region in the early part of the century and administered artificial resuscitation to a whole host of dying crafts, trying to use crafts as a means of economic salvation. But, as Robert Gray and Garry Barker recall in their conversation (on page 38) studio artists in time took over organizations such as the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, which were intended to help native craftspeople market their wares to outside markets. Folk evolved into fine.

In this issue of *Now & Then*, editor Pat Arnow and I hope we have given a sense of the very complicated and always fascinating relationship between folk and fine art. Our aim is to give an accurate picture of the wide variety of artists of both types who are living and creating here in the Southern Highlands. We want to make the point that there is indeed fine art flourishing in this region and that folk art is no mere quaint and comforting replay of the past.

Making the distinction between folk and fine art should be easy for a folklorist, but it isn't. What we're talking about is a continuum, not two mutually exclusive categories. At one end fine art is art that comes out of long and rigorous training in universities or art schools, training that emphasizes aesthetic standards and exacting techniques. And, as potter Sandy Blain stresses over and over again in a dialogue with folklorist Roby Cogswell (on page 41), fine art puts a premium on individual creativity, on making a fresh and original statement with each piece.

Folklorists, when they're feeling especially succinct, define folklore as communication within small groups. So, folk art is the art produced by a community principally for other members of the community, an art that helps to express their sense of regional or ethnic identity, their values and beliefs.

Context is crucial. University-trained artists who make their own vegetable dye, weave their own fabric and produce a quilt that hangs on a museum wall to be viewed and appreciated by patrons are not in any sense folk artists despite the antiquity of their methods. A Hancock County woman I know takes the scraps of material left over from the clothes she made for her children over the years and then uses a sewing machine—a choice that would offend some folk art purists because it smacks of the industrial age—to stitch together beautiful quilts based on traditional designs. She does not want to sell them, and her children would not hear of it if she did. They take those quilts, point to this square or that and tell their own children stories from their youth. She is a folk artist.

Shifts in context can transform a folk art into a fine art object. Back in the Depression, Jesse Jones' father took the white oak split baskets he didn't need and peddled them around the valley, selling them for 75 cents. His son used to produce a basket and hand it over to his wife Bertha. These tightly-woven, sturdy baskets got taken into the barn and filled with eggs. It was simply a basket. Today, Jones (featured on page 12) weaves a later edition of the very same basket and takes it to a local craft festival to sell for $30 to $100. That basket is called a folk craft and is sold to all sorts of customers. Many of those customers are middle class professionals from outside the region, and some become collectors, purchasing the baskets because they serve as rustic decoration, as symbols of the past or as good investments. Some day in the future, Jones' baskets might well be exhibited up on a pedestal in galleries and museums and admired for their beautifully elegant form.

But remember, those definitions of folk and fine represent the theoretical ends of the spectrum. In reality, there is certainly personal expression in folk art, and fine art expresses the values and beliefs of the fine arts community. Besides, there is much fertile territory in between those two poles where folk and fine art meet and merge in an endless variety of ways. And that is where much of the work represented within this issue falls. Johnson City, Tenn., native Kenton Coe studies in Paris, lives in New York and among his serious musical compositions is a piece called *Carols from the Appalachian Mountains*. Relative newcomer Ellen Zahorec settles in North Carolina where she reinterprets in textiles and paper her own Slavic folk heritage from her Ohio childhood. The Roadside Theater creates new plays out of Kentucky's folk stories using folk speech, and outdoor pageants such as Valdese, N.C.'s *From this Day Forward* often border on folk drama as local citizens collaborate with professionals in fashioning a production portraying their own history. The audience is usually a mix of tourists and neighbors.

We are especially excited about this issue because, as our regular readers have no doubt noticed, it marks the first time that *Now and Then* has been able to use color photography. We felt strongly that we could not do justice to the theme without being able to use color, and fortunately the L.J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation agreed. It is through their generous assistance that we are able to have color reproductions of Appalachian art.

—Jane Harris Woodside, Associate Editor

Center for Appalachian Studies and Services

Beyond Nostalgia

This latest issue of *Now and Then* raises important questions concerning the ways in which stereotyped beliefs distort and constrict our perceptions of social and cultural realities. We all know that Appalachia is supposed to be one of the greatest repositories of all forms of folk culture, particularly folk arts and crafts. It is hard to reconcile that fundamentally romantic notion with the full range of artistic styles and traditions within the region.

The actual historical and cultural patterns we find in Appalachia today are far more complex and diverse than our generalized impressions would lead us to believe. Contrary to H.L. Mencken's canard, we are not living in the Sahara of the Bozarts. Neither are we dealing with North America's own Shangri-La or Brigadoon, an Edenic enclave of traditionality isolated from the currents of fashion and change sweeping over the rest of the modern world.

As this issue of *Now and Then* illustrates, Appalachia has its cosmopolitan composers, poets and painters, as well as a wide array of non-elite artists and craftspeople. Some still work within traditional family and neighborhood contexts, while others have been lionized by the alienated exurban romantics who have historically been the patrons and advocates of folk revivalism in this country and elsewhere. Whether we like to admit it or not, there is a nostalgia industry in Appalachia which caters to real, continuing desires for authentic, organic alternatives to the perceived sterility and aridity of an overorganized, overcultivated mainstream culture. The rhetoric of folk revivalism has given rise to new realities, to the selective reconstruction and reinterpretation of older cultural symbols to suit contemporary social needs, not only of the people who were born and raised in Appalachia but also of newcomers who have come to identify with the region.

To make sense of the complete spectrum of Appalachian artistic expression, we need to stop trying to distinguish the authentic from the synthetic. We should pay more attention to the universal human needs which all forms and genres of art fulfill. Hopefully this latest issue of *Now and Then* will help to encourage a broader and more inclusive understanding of the artistic life of a regional culture which has too often been dismissed as marginal, simple and homogeneous.

This is the most ambitious edition of *Now and Then* to date. In many ways, it is a concrete expression of our ambitions for the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services as a whole. We are not satisfied with taking Appalachia and its cultural history for granted. We want to break down morally and intellectually stultifying notions which hamper full appreciation of the creativity, intelligence and diversity of the region's people. If you believe in what we are doing and would like to assist us in attaining our goals, I would like to invite you to become a Friend of CASS. If you would like more information concerning CASS and its programs, please write to me in care of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services, Box 19180A, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN 37614.

—Richard Blaustein, Director

Archives of Appalachia

Studying the Craftmakers

At fairs, festivals, roadsides and malls throughout Appalachia, crafts are sold to middle-class Americans willing to pay sometimes outrageous prices for "authentic" items. The ubiquity of crafts perhaps has obscured the fact that crafts have not always been items meant for conspicuous consumption. Crafts, as part of popular culture, are the products of the artistic expression of ordinary people. Perhaps it is true, however, as Gertie, Harriet Simpson Arnow's dollmaker realized, that mass production for the marketplace demands sacrifice of artistic crafting. The tension between art and marketplace is not unusual. But the overwhelming demand for craft items by middle-class Americans is an interesting phenomenon which no doubt reveals as much about American society and culture as do the artists and the crafts they fabricate. Analysis and examination of artists and their handicrafts, as well as the importance and function attached to their crafts, are valuable to an understanding of national, regional and local cultures.

Materials useful for research on handicrafts are available in the Archives of Appalachia. Three types of media—video tapes, audio tapes and printed sources—document the fabrication and function of crafts in Appalachia. Included in the Broadside Television Collection, for example, are three-quarter inch video cassettes which center on cloth weaving, cane weaving, basket-making, quilting, sled-making and toy-making. The Charles Gunter Collection includes reel to reel audio tapes which discuss woodcrafts and the construction of miniature furniture, while the Burton-Manning Collection includes a few reel-to-reel audio tapes which discuss making brooms, rugs and cornshuck dolls. The archives also holds a 21-minute program, "Hands All Around," which examines the role of quilts and quilting in American society from the nineteenth century to the present. The program is available in slide-tape and VHS formats.

Weaving is the topic of an in-depth interview conducted in 1975 with Taft Greer, a weaver from Mountain City, Tenn. The documentation of the Greer interview includes printed materials, 10 reel-to-reel video tapes and two audio cassettes. These materials are included in the Larry Nave Collection.

In addition to the above-mentioned sources, the archives holds a number of publications which focus entirely or in part on handicrafts. Among the titles contained in the archives' Special Collections are a number of the *Foxfire* books, as well as works on quilting, toymaking, and crafts and craftsmakers in Tennessee and southern Appalachia. The archives' Appalachian publications include titles which frequently carry articles on crafts, including *Goldenseal*, *Highland Highlights*, and the *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin*.

For more information on the holdings of the Archives of Appalachia please write the archives in care of the Sherrod Library, ETSU, Box 22450A, or call 615-929-4338.

—Marie Tedesco, Public Service Archivist

—Norma Thomas, Assistant Director for Archives & Special Collections

Carroll Reece Museum

Pottery of Appalachia Then and Now

Archeologists tell us that clay vessels have been used in this region for many centuries. Some of the earliest artifacts are pottery shards. The Reece is fortunate to include a couple of early clay vessels as well as various shards in its permanent collection. The pieces represent the Mississippian and the Woodland periods.

After the settlement of the Northeast Tennessee region, a pottery was established in Washington County on the bank of the Nolichucky River. Owned and operated by Charles F. Decker, the Keystone Pottery began operating in 1872 and was active for almost 40 years. A large crock made by Decker was donated to the East Tennessee State Teacher's College Museum by Decker's son, Richard, in the late 1930s and transferred to the Reece collection in 1965. It is the nucleus of our pottery collection. Fully documented in the decoration on the crock is maker, date and place. Also included in our collection are two other pieces said to have been made in The Keystone Pottery, one a small pot, the other a 1-1/2-gallon jug. A footstone with the initials "E.J.G.," made at Keystone Pottery, was purchased for our collection by the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services in 1987.

Additional examples from the late 19th century are a one-gallon whiskey jug donated by Nat T. Winston in 1970 and a three-gallon demijohn donated by Mrs. Doak Bowman of Unicoi in 1956.

Several contemporary potters are represented in our collection. Douglas Ferguson, born in Yancey County, N.C., has owned and operated the Pigeon Forge Pottery near Gatlinburg since 1946. Purchased for the Reece collection in 1965, a shallow glazed stoneware bowl is an outstanding example of his work.

Toshika Takaezu, formerly an instructor at the Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina, is represented by a glazed pottery bowl, also purchased in 1965.

A well-known Georgia potter, Charles Counts, whose work has been a major stylistic influence on ceramics in the southeastern United States, is represented with a wheel-thrown vase purchased for the collection in 1964.

A commemorative plate was commissioned by Friends of the Reece Museum in 1986 in honor of ETSU's 75th Anniversary. The artist, Sally Patterson, co-owns and co-operates the Iron Mountain Stoneware Pottery at Laurel Bloomery, Tennessee. The glazed design incorporates a quote from Emerson's *Birthday Book* for October 10, the anniversary of the original dedication of the university.

Cynthia Bringle studied at the Memphis Academy of Arts, the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Maine and Alfred University in New York where she graduated in 1964. Bringle began teaching summer sessions at the Penland School of Crafts in 1964 and set up a pottery shop in an old house in East Tennessee in 1965. She moved to North Carolina Mountains near Penland in 1970. Friends of the Reece Museum purchased a Bringle wheel-thrown glazed stoneware bowl in 1965, and a wheel-thrown bisque-fired stoneware candlestand for the Reece collection in 1970.

Other significant pieces in the collection include an unglazed bottle by Gerald Edmundson, associate professor of art in ETSU's department of art, purchased and donated by an anonymous benefactor in 1971; a porcelain bowl by Christine Brown, an ETSU Master of Fine Arts graduate, donated by the artist in 1984; "Sunburst," a wall title by O.J. Bergeron of Knoxville, donated by the artist in 1984; and "People Pressure," a bisque-fired wall sculpture by Jerry Chappelle, purchased by Friends of the Reece Museum in 1988. Chappelle owns and operates the Happy Valley Pottery in North Georgia.

Non-regional artists represented in the collection include Joan Mondale whose glazed stoneware bowl was purchased by Friends of the Reece Museum in 1986 following Mondale's lecture during the University's 75th anniversary celebration; and Fran Lehnert of Kent, Ohio, whose terra sigillata slip glazed pot was purchased by Friends of the Reece Museum in 1988.

Our collection of regional crafts is still small compared to collections elsewhere. It is impressive in quality. It is our goal to build the collection which began in the early years of the museum when it was housed on the third floor of the library and to preserve examples of works of outstanding craftspeople. Our pottery collection is but one example of the excellence represented in our growing crafts collection.

—Helen Roseberry, Director
—Margaret Carr, Registrar

A crock 26 inches in height made in 1884 by Charles Decker. From the collection of the Carroll Reece Museum at East Tennessee State University.

Elmira Corbett Tries Natural Toothpaste

My college-age daughter came into my bathroom
saying, "Mama, if you're gonna yell about bein'
outta toothpaste you can just use mine."
Well, I tried it, some kind of natural stuff that
tastes like cardboard and has what she calls "propolis
and myrrh," and I said, "Ain't that the stuff they were
gonna use to embalm Jesus?"
She stared at me like college people will do.
Anyhow, she went on about how it was sugar free
and how good it was to be close to nature. Humph!
I appreciate her concern about my teeth, but all it
did was make me feel sick so I drank sweet tea right
after I brushed them so what good did that do?
Seems like everybody has taken on the work of takin'
care of me: Everytime I pick up a magazine or turn on
the TV some expert is telling me to watch my cholesterol;
watch the color of some mole I've had forever; or feel
for some lump that might have sprung up in the night,
and search for blood in my stools.
I've used natural dyes, Nutrasweet pies,
wrinkle preventors, wrinkle fillers for when the preventors
don't work, and I don't leave the house to take out
the trash 'less I got on sunglasses to keep out UV rays.
I been checked up and down, over and under, poked and prodded
by every "ist" and "ologist" in the phone book.
I'm plain worn out from traveling from one waiting room
to another just to hear them tell me what I knew all along:
I'm fine: And I want yall to just let me be.
All my life I've lived off dreams and creams and I
ain't got a damn thing to show for it except the
natural weakening and fattening of a woman moving between
the cradle and the grave just like the good Lord intended.

—Marilyn Orchoff

Marilyn Orchoff teaches creative writing and literature at Spartanburg High School in Spartanburg, S.C. Her first chapbook of poems, ***Moonwritten****, was published this year. Her work has also been published in* ***English Journal****,* ***Kudzu****,* ***Different Drummer*** *and* ***Foothill Notes****.* *Another of Orchoff's poems appears on page 43.*

Kenton Coe

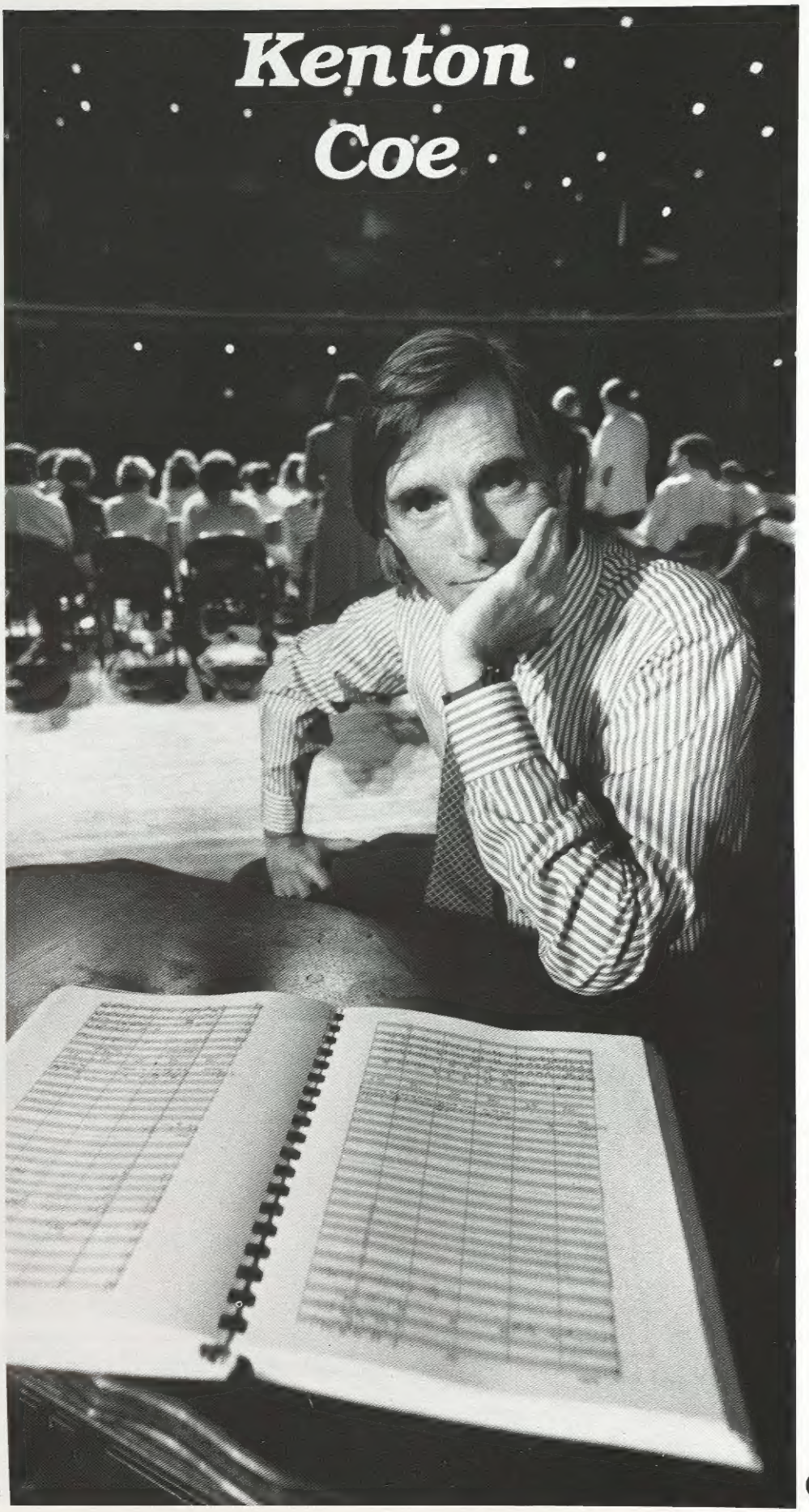


Photo by
Jack Rose

**profile
by
Jill
Oxendine**

Kenton Coe was 13 years old when he wrote his first piece of music and 25 when he attempted a major composition. Ten years later, his work was being performed in France by some of the greatest classical musicians in the world.

The artist's journey from his boyhood in post-Depression East Tennessee to the pomp and circumstance of classical Europe is a tale at which Coe himself marvels. "It's an extraordinary thing," he said in a recent interview. "I never dreamed when I was growing up that I would ever become a serious composer."

But the 58-year-old artist has done just that—and, significantly, recognizes and values the Appalachian influences that have shaped him as an artist. His folk inheritance—the haunting, spiritual melodies of his mountain-born youth—continue to influence his compositions.

Coe, who spent most of the '50s and '60s studying and working in Europe, has lived in Johnson City, Tenn., since 1974. While he spends part of the year in France, most of his work is accomplished in a small, home-based studio that houses, among other things, rows of books and mementos, a small desk, an antique Steinway grand piano, a synthesizer and a Macintosh computer system.

Photographs displayed on the walls hint at the scope of Coe's success: a picture with former President Jimmy Carter and filmmaker Ross Spears at the Kennedy Center; another at the Paris Opera with President Pompidou; another of best friend Jean-Pierre Marty, a French conductor whom Coe has known since his school days at the Paris Conservatory and Fontainebleau School.

"It's hard being a classical composer in this day and age," he admitted. "To be able to make a living at it is very unusual. On the other hand, not many people are willing to live the way I have—without things. Most people feel compelled or pressured into having things—I never had those feelings."

Over the last three decades, Coe has not only "made a living" but also attracted the attention of major arts entities around the world, including the Lyndhurst Foundation which presented him with an $80,000 endowment in 1984. Among other professional and academic awards, he has been named composer of the year by the Tennessee Music Teachers' Association, elected as a national patron of the music fraternity Delta Omicron and awarded the Samuel Doak Award by Tusculum College in Greeneville, Tenn.

Many of his works are obvious throwbacks to his Appalachian roots—such as *Carols from the Appalachian Mountains* or his ballet *The Legend of Candy's Creek*. But he is perhaps best known for his first opera, *South*, that showcases playwright Julien Green's psychological drama about a Charleston, S.C., family at the outbreak of the Civil War.

Subsequently, he wrote three other operas—including *Le Grand Siecle*, completed in the late 1960s, and *Rachel*, a piece about the stormy marriage of President Andrew Jackson begun in 1974 and staged in 1989 by the Knoxville Opera. "*Rachel* has been my most complex project to date," said Coe. "It was very difficult to stage...like a movie—a sprawling panorama of their (Andrew Jackson's and Rachel's) lives together."

Numerous smaller creations have come in between—including film scores for Universal's *Birds in Peru* and three full-length Ross Spears' documentaries—*Agee*, *The Electric Valley* and *Long Shadows*.

"I keep busy, and that's the extraordinary thing," Coe says incredulously as he describes his next project. It's an opera called *The Morning Watch*, which has as its text the writings of James Agee, a Knoxville-born novelist whom Coe has twice before used as inspiration.

A native of Johnson City, Coe spent his elementary school years in Chattanooga, where his father, an Army engineer, worked for the Tennessee Valley Authority. It was while living in southeastern Tennessee that a seven-year-old Coe took piano lessons for the first time at the Cadek Conservatory, a private music school that is now part of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

"I absolutely hated the lessons," he recalled with a chuckle. "I don't know why my parents made me take them. I must have shown some kind of talent, but I was always upset that my older brother never had to do it, while I did."

Several years passed before Coe realized it was the technical aspects of music—and not the performance of it—that kept him hitting the keys. "I hated playing piano then, and I still do. For me, it's a tool for writing. It just never interested me to be a performer and try to wow people with my ability."

When Coe was 11 years old, his family moved again to Knoxville where he continued keyboard and took an after-school folk dancing class taught by Ethel Capps—the now well-known Appalachian music and dance instructor. Her influence and the music she introduced to the timid, impressionable musician left an indelible mark.

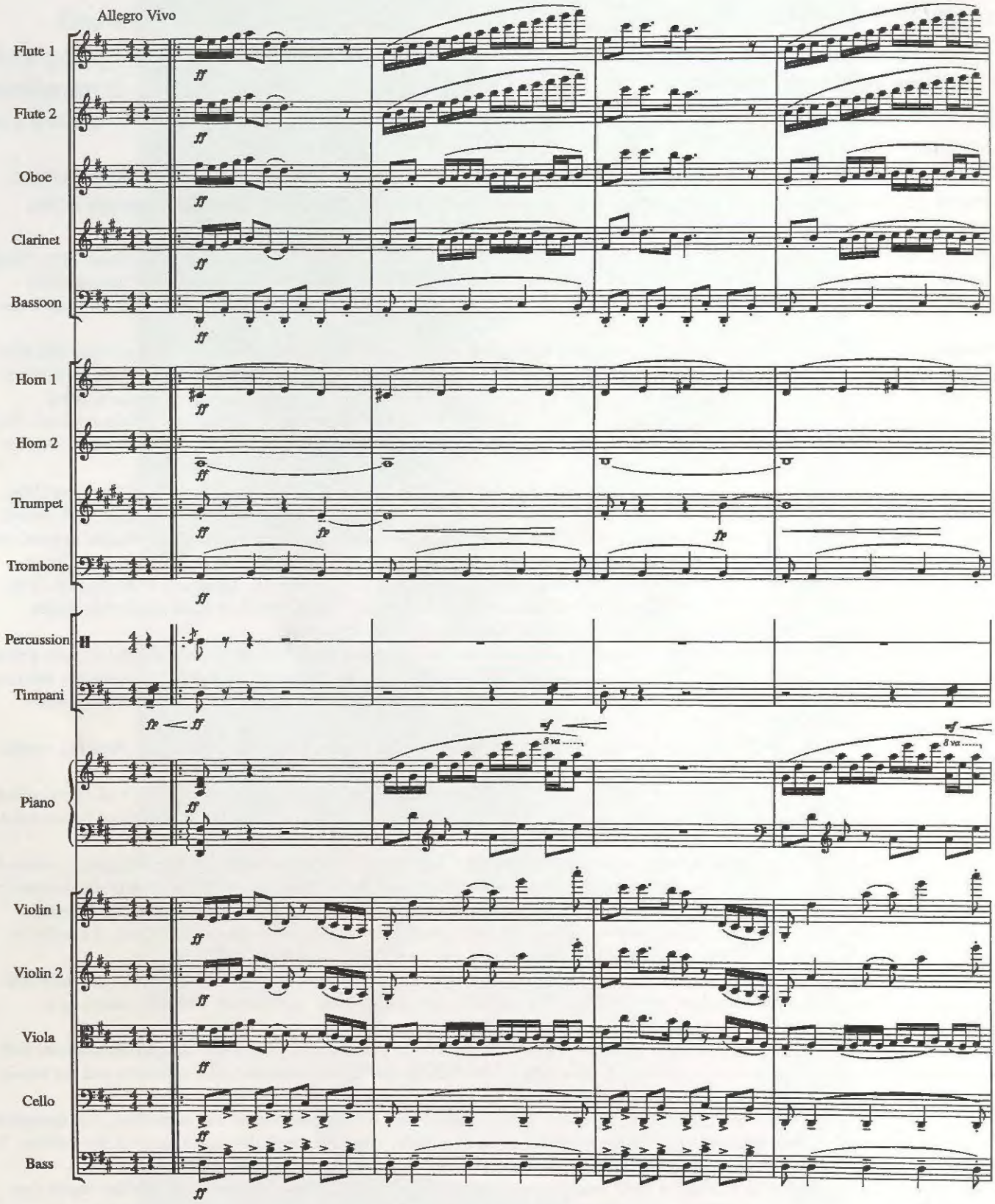
"I fell into that like a duck to water. I loved it," he said. "It (the Scotch-Irish and English tunes) was something that appealed to me intuitively. I've always been haunted by that style of music—low-key, eerie, sensitive, spiritual—and I use it in my writing. I feel very much an inheritor of a wealth of material that people should hear."

Unfortunately, the death of Coe's father in 1945 brought many changes—including a move back to Johnson City where Coe completed his senior year at Science Hill High School. "By that time," he noted, "I was already into writing music for my own amusement. Very small things, but I really liked it. It was something that gave me immense satisfaction. It still does."

Like his father and grandfather before him, Coe studied at upstate New York's Hobart College before transferring in his junior year to Yale where he eventually obtained a music history degree. "My intention then was to teach," he said. But his Yale studies,

Rachel

Kenton Coe



Instrumental passage from the score of ***Rachel****, Kenton Coe's latest opera, the story of Andrew Jackson's wife. The work premiered in Knoxville in 1989.*

under the renowned German composer Paul Hindemith, inspired him to strive for something far more complex. "He (Hindemith) was very serious, very matter-of-fact, and I responded to that," explained Coe. "He was a person who believed that music ought to play an everyday function in society. He believed there was a purpose for music, besides marches for weddings and funerals...that it had to be a part of the living of life itself."

Coe embraced Hindemith's belief with all the eagerness and idealism of youth. With the help of a generous godmother, he spent the next two months in Paris studying under the famous pedagogue Nadia Boulanger at the Palace of Fountainbleu American School.

And it was here that his career was irreversibly changed.

Boulanger was so impressed with Coe's talent that she obtained scholarships for him to stay in Paris and study with her. "It was a very nice relationship," Coe recalled. "She was a world figure in music. And she had a very strange and interesting personality, very difficult. But she was very nice to me."

Boulanger's faith in Coe's abilities was, and continues to be, a major impetus in his growth as an artist. "I'll never forget what she said to me. Here I was, just another dumb American student, and the last lesson I had with her, she said she wanted to talk to me about something important. Then she went into this long preamble...about how difficult the music field is and how there's so little reward. Then she said, 'I really think you are talented, and I want you to stay and study with me.' I almost died; I was so shocked. She had never given me any inclination that she was thinking that...Nobody has done that since. I've lived on that for the rest of my life."

After a three-year tutelage under Boulanger, Coe became associate production manager for New York City's Vox records and began working, in his spare time, on *South*. "I thought if I wrote an opera, it would attract attention. It was a very calculated move," said Coe.

In retrospect, he marvels at his own naivete. "It was a totally idiotic thing to have contemplated...The chances of realizing a thing like that are about a million to one. It really was a miracle that *South* was performed."

But performed it was—for the first time in 1965 (Coe was 34 years old) by the Opera of Marseilles. And again, seven years later by the Paris Opera, with President and Madame Pompidou in attendance. A reviewer for *Figaro* wrote of it: "There are moments in this score, so distinguished and so stylistically pure, which touch the heart."

Andrew Jackson (John Stephens) mourns at the bedside of his wife Rachel (Stella Zambalis) in the Knoxville Opera Company production of *Rachel* by Kenton Coe. Photo by Eric L. Smith. Courtesy of the Knoxville Opera Company.

Coe had definitely made his mark—but the success, while sweet, did not bring the results he'd hoped for. While it was a classical anomaly for an unknown, American composer to achieve European recognition, the triumph did little to change Coe's career, except to confirm what he already knew—that he would remain a composer for the rest of his life.

The early 1970s found Coe still working and living in New York City. By 1973, however, family demands and discussions with the Tennessee Arts Commission drew him back to Tennessee. "I returned, basically, because my family needed me."

When questioned about his reasons for staying, he replied, "I can live here cheaper than anyplace in the world. It's that precisely."

Despite the grandiosity of many of his works, Coe points to a *Schumann Study* written in 1984 for the Johnson City Symphony as his greatest achievement. "I feel it's my most successful work. It's very high-minded, very dissonant, very difficult."

Today, he is comfortable with his life and proud of his accomplishments. If there is a frustration, it is with the system—the lack of monetary support and business finesse in the classical realm. "Composers like myself don't have agents," Coe pointed out. "It's a very difficult business. Good reviews and word-of-mouth are the best assets. New commissions do continue to arrive, and fees do get bigger." He has just completed a celebration overture called *Ischiana* for the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra. "That will keep the wolf from the door for quite a while," he says.

Hindemith's lesson—that music should be a part of everyday life—is still Coe's sustaining philosophy. And he seldom turns down chances to compose for his local Episcopal church, symphony orchestra or civic chorale. "I wish I were writing for the New York Philharmonic every day. But I'm just as thrilled to be writing for a first-rate organist here, like I'm doing right now. I find it very challenging. I believe anything that somebody will perform is worth being written."

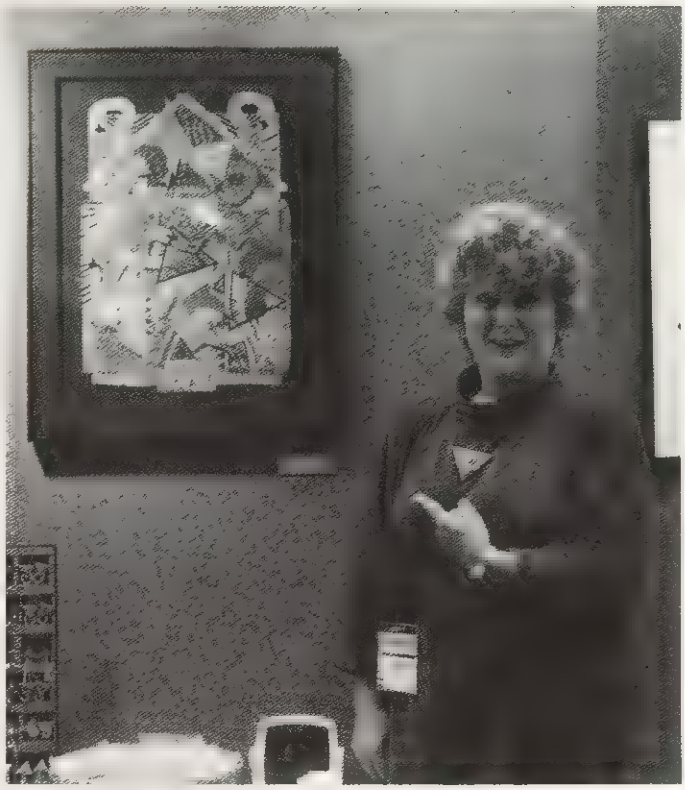
But his greatest reward, he says, is simply the work. "Composing music has always made me happy. That's why I tell people, 'If you don't enjoy doing something, the labor of doing it, then you should try something else.' It doesn't matter whether you're good or successful. If you don't enjoy it, it's a waste of time. And life's simply too short for that."

Jill Oxendine edits ***Artsletter,*** *the newsletter of the Johnson City Area Arts Council and is the founding editor of the* ***Storytelling Journal*** *for the National Association for the Perpetuation and Preservation of Storytelling.*

Ellen Zahorec

Asheville, North Carolina

Studio Artist



Ellen Zahorec is an artist who combines fine arts media—paint, graphite, oils, acrylics—with crafts construction. Her work often employs sewing techniques, weaving and handmade paper. A native of Lorain, Ohio, Zahorec came to the region in 1975. Eventually she earned a masters in fabric design from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. While in graduate school, she frequently took courses at the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Gatlinburg, Tenn. She is in the process of moving her home and studio from Brevard to Asheville, N.C. Her work, featured in major galleries in Chicago, Atlanta, and San Francisco, is purchased by both private collectors and corporate clients.

by
Jane Harris Woodside

My ethnic background is very folky. I'm second generation Slovak-American. My grandfather carved whirlygigs, and my grandmother did the doilies and stitched flowers on all the shelf scarves that were in the kitchen. It was just a way of life—but primarily used for decorating their home, making their lives pretty with something fun and fanciful. I was being brought up around flashy colors and decoration. I was born with it.

I suppose that I had bigger visions and dreams than just pillowcases and dresser scarves. And since a lot of my time was spent in museums and galleries and looking at art work, I aspired to greater things than decorating my house. The greater thing that I aspired to was to have that object hanging on a museum wall somewhere, someday. When I went to graduate school, I told them that I wanted to elevate the level of women's needlework to the place that I thought it should be. And that was not your everyday functional "keep women busy" level, but in the greater scheme of things, to make it be important, to get much wider recognition. Still, it has the elements—the colorful decorative elements of folk art, but I guess in a lot of people's minds, when you put paint on it and frame it, it's fine art. The creator's intent and the context is what can determine how it's perceived.

I really don't have an every day viewing audience. For most people, my work is probably too exciting, too overwhelming. There isn't anything that they can immediately recognize in it that makes them feel comfortable. I don't mean to make people comfortable with my work. But your average collectors, I suppose, really want to just buy something pretty that they don't have to deal with. You do have to deal with my work because if my color doesn't get you, the obsessive-compulsive decoration will.

If the galleries are doing their job, they're educating the clientele. They get to know me, and they want to learn everything about me. They want to learn all my secrets. And then they have this myth they create to tell the client. And the client buys a little bit of me, buys a little bit of that myth.

When we came to Tennessee and then to North Carolina, I swore I would never be a landscape painter. It just comes naturally for me to do the kind of form that I do, so I guess it's interesting for the galleries who say, "Well, look—here's this woman living in the mountains, and she's doing this folk art-looking, decorative, Mexican, Russian-looking stuff."

I love all that folk art. I admire it. Those things are treasures. I don't feel like I have the patience or time to do that work. The statements I have to make, I have to make quickly, and I do them in paint because I only have a good 60 more years left. I see an urgency about me that the textile traditions don't allow. Although, you know, I have thousands of little dots on my work, it's still a much less time-consuming process than if I did it in fiber, fabric or embroidery. I've got to do more, and I've got to do it quicker.

Southern Chaos: Shouting Dogs, **mixed-media on handmade paper by Ellen Zahorec, 1988.**

Jesse Jones

Scott County, Virginia

Basketmaker

Born 82 years ago in Greene County, Tenn., Jesse Jones has lived all but about a year of his life in Scott County, Va., at the foot of Big Ridge Mountain. There he and his wife Bertha farm. At the peak of their working lives, they raised cattle, milk cows, hogs, chickens, horses, hay and some tobacco. And Jones made—and still makes—fine white oak baskets from start to finish, beginning with the finding and cutting down of basket bushes and culminating with the final weaving. He is unique among Appalachian craftspeople in that he never stopped making baskets over the course of his life. In the 1970s, his pattern of occasional basketmaking changed, and his basket production increased as he began to appear at local crafts fairs and was eventually featured in John Rice Irwin's ***Baskets and Basketmakers in Southern Appalachia****. During those years, he could often be found sitting on his front porch weaving baskets with splits soaking in a dented aluminum bowl at his feet. However, of late, his production has slacked off due to age and the difficulty he has finding good white oak trees.*

My father would make baskets to use, but he would sell what he didn't need. Put them on a rope, take them around the country and peddle them out. He'd sell them from 75 cents to a dollar a basket.

My mother did most of the making. Dad got the wood and worked it up mostly. I remember once we come back here, right up here on the ridge, got a bush. He split his wood out in the woods mostly. Occasionally Dad would make one. He was slow. It took him a long time. Made an awful good basket, though, when he made one.

I learned, I guess, just kind of watching my parents. I'd maybe work a little on them. I remember, made two small ones, I don't know, I was about maybe 10 or 12 years old. One for my brother Everett, one for me to take our dinner to school in. We were just little fellows. That's the first ones I made. Yeah, that's the first ones I remember.

Now, I didn't make no baskets back when I was able to work. Maybe one now and then to use. You didn't have all these plastic buckets then. Made baskets to carry stuff in. Just now and then. I didn't have time to look at a basket. Needed one, made it. Or one of the neighbors wanted one, I'd maybe make one. Enough to keep from forgetting how, I reckon. I made mostly about a half a bushel basket or a little bigger. They didn't want none of these little ones to set up and look at.

They used them for everything that you could think of on the farm, I reckon. They would pick beans in them, gather eggs. Oh, I don't know what else. About anything you use an old bucket for now. We don't use baskets now. You can get these old plastic buckets for little or nothing. I've kept a few baskets here, think I'd use them. Maybe use them awhile, and maybe they'd be all I had. Somebody come along, begging for a basket, and I'd finally sell it to them.

One man lives in Bluff City, Tenn. He got a lot of baskets here. And he said there's more money, he believes, in investing in baskets. He's going to wait until I'm done and gone, and then he can sell them. Make a profit on them.

Another man used to come up here and buy baskets. Well, he was a-buying them and taking them and selling them and making a profit. There was a girl, she was raised up here. She would come by and stop occasionally. Come up here once with an ad cut out of the Knoxville paper, a great long ad. My baskets and Mildred Youngblood's. Well,

then she cut out his name and phone number and said, "I thought you might want to know who was a-making money off of you." And he come up here. I had five baskets I was working on. He wanted to pay me for them and let him finish them. And I wouldn't let him have them. He ain't been back since. I got rid of him.

I like to sell a basket if I take a notion. In a way, I'd rather give them away than sell them. If people want the basket to keep, I like to make them. I don't like nothing to do with these fellows buying them to make a profit on them. I'd just rather make them for somebody that wants them to keep. These people that buy them to make money on them, they don't care about me or the basket either. Money's what they're after.

Jesse Jones with white oak logs to be split for baskets.

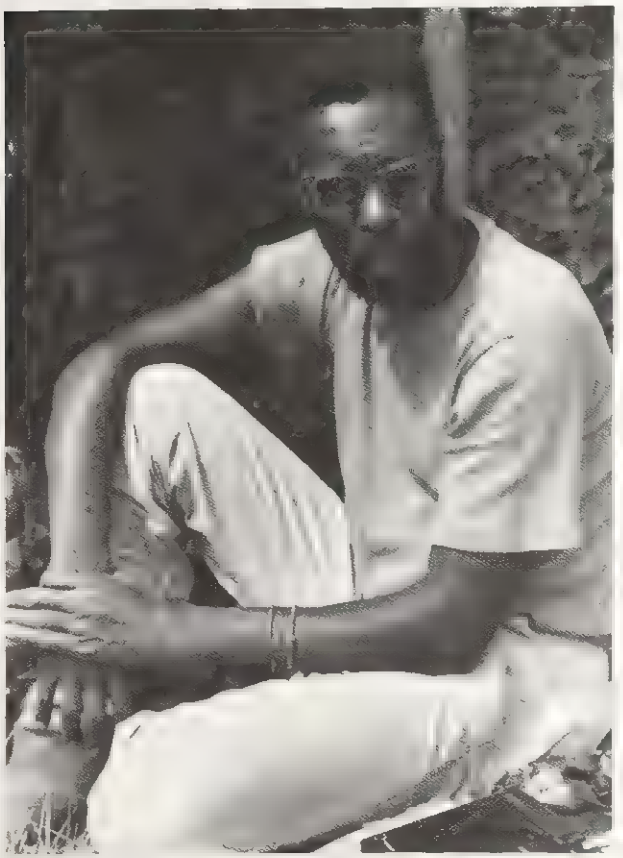
The basketmaker splits the white oak logs.

Jesse Jones weaves white oak split basket. Photos by Kenneth Murray.

Sammie Nicely

Russellville, Tennessee

Potter and Sculptor



Sammie Nicely's studio, the Nicely Art Center, is a small white building sitting up on a short, steep bank on the two-lane that runs through the rural community of Russellville, Tenn. His completed pieces compete for space with materials for works-in-progress and boxes containing the work of other Black Appalachian artists featured in the recent "From Africa to Appalachia" show curated by Nicely and held at Morristown's Rose Art Center. There is almost no room to walk. Nicely, born into one of the small town's few black families 40 years ago, received his art training at Middle Tennessee State University and the University of Tennessee's Arrowmont School of Arts & Crafts. Only recently testing his skills at drawing and painting, the artist has specialized in three-dimensional pieces made out of wood, ceramics and all sorts of found objects. He is especially known for his haunting ceramic masks. He divides his days among studio work, doing art residencies in schools and making the rounds of craft shows and, more recently, galleries.

Well, I've always wanted to be an artist for as far as I can remember. I think it's a God-given talent. Growing up, I didn't know artists really or see very much art work at all. I guess my father in his own way would have been an artist, was sort of a jack-of-all-trades, did things his own way for his construction work. My family was very supportive. You know, they didn't really understand art, but my parents never never discouraged me.

Cities have so many hassles. I lived in D.C. for awhile, and I decided to give it up and move back home. I'm still torn between cities and rural areas. I love cities. I can feel comfortable in a city and move around and not look over my shoulder.

But there are advantages to living in East Tennessee. I guess my whole plan moving back home was that I can live here. My studio rent is cheap. I scrap all my materials. And I can fire anywhere. I don't have to worry about the city coming in and saying, "Well, it's a fire hazard." I'm a member of the volunteer firehouse, so they can't say too much.

The disadvantages sometimes, you know, communicating with people. I have friends who are artists. You have to drive an hour to visit sometime. There's nobody in my town who's really a serious artist. You need a support group to really understand where you're at and what you're trying to accomplish. And it's tough. It gets to be real crazy when you have to deal with a society that's not really conscious of art, or it's not really important to them at all.

I think if I'd grown up in a city the influence of African art, black art might have been a lot stronger. At Middle Tennessee State University, none of the history books that we had mentioned anything about early black artists in America. My work is heavily influenced by African art. That was one of the advantages of living in D.C. I used to go to the Museum of African Art a lot. And not only that, there were other galleries and shops. So I think that if I'd lived in the city, it would have been a greater influence as far as black awareness.

I do remember an exhibit that they had, "Africa in Motion," which was at the National Gallery. I was just struck by the visual imagery of the masks, the feelings, the presence of the masks, the whole—I don't know—it was like they were alive. Even now when I go to galleries and look at African art, some of the pieces are just so incredible, their presence, even from the most simple ones to the ornate ones, with all of the buttons, with the cowrie shells and raffia and just combination of things: color, texture, designs, geometric designs. They're real moving. When I look at

Raku pottery mask by Sammie Nicely, 1987.

them, I register a lot, and hopefully that comes out in my work. I'm influenced by a lot of different tribes. I try to look at it as much as I can.

Appalachian influences? Yeah, crafts, folk art. Heavy folk art. I love folk art. And even in Russellville, when I came back home and started looking around, there were weavers here. There was another black man who made little oak baskets, Mr. Ray, John Ray. There was another lady here who worked with them also, Rosalie Pleass, who did cornshuck dolls, did some weaving, she did painting. She did a piece, an incredible piece, with cornshucks, a wall hanging that was dedicated to Franklin Delano Roosevelt. It's a museum piece, but it's all done with cornshucks.

When I really look back at Russellville, I feel real good that there were people before me who did crafts. And hopefully, there will be people after me.

I like to call myself a contemporary folk artist. Some people question that, but I like to call myself a contemporary folk artist because of the use of materials, how I use materials, found materials and things that are around me. I was talking about the lady who did the cornshucks. I have a piece that I did: I used cornshucks on the piece. It's a mask.

When I approach my work, I don't approach it from academics. I just do it. I think that's one of the things about folk artists. A lot of times, there are visionary folk artists. I mean, their whole thing is that visual image. And I start seeing things as it starts to fall together. And materials, a lot of materials that I'm beginning to scrap and use. Buttons and beads, beer tops and things like that, just a lot of different things. What's available, what's around.

I think that you can take any medium as a craftsperson and use your own imagination, add and subtract, and it becomes art. There's so many crafts things that I think that are technique and they're repetitive. I mean it's the same sort of basket. But there are people, I guess, who do baskets, and the ones that have added their own sort of little techniques or way that they do things. Sometimes there's feelings in it.

Why am I doing art? Self satisfaction, I think. Communication with others. A lot of times when I do my art, I'd like for people to share what their own sort of interpretation is of what I'm doing. Or at least to look at it and explore it. A lot of times I don't even like to use names. Because a lot of times I feel that people will look at that name, and they try to find *that*, rather than explore it themselves. Cause they're not going to see the same thing that the artist sees. They don't have the same experiences. So I think art is that common ground where each person comes together with their own ideas.

Renee Stewart

Hancock County, Tennessee

Woodcarver

Photo by Kenneth Murray.

Renee Stewart, 26, grew up next door to her grandfather, Alex Stewart. She and her older brother, Rick, 29, watched as her grandfather, a master cooper, a maker of cedar vessels banded in white oak, was featured on the cover of National Geographic's ***Craftsmen of the World****, received invitations to the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife, and was named a National Heritage Fellow by the National Endowment for the Arts. Today, both sister and brother carry on two of their grandfather's many skills: Renee is a woodcarver and her brother practices cooperage. Both still live on the family farm on Panther Creek in the lovely but still relatively isolated mountains of Hancock County, Tenn.*

Grandpa always carved us out little things, and they just totally amazed me. He carved knives out of wood, solid wood, and they would have movable parts. The blades would be movable. And it just, just thrilled me to death to try to watch him do that. We used to go over in the summer when school was out. He would make us things. He used to make us little boats, you know, and all kinds of neat things. Little trains, puzzles and so on. He would always give us something. Grandpa, he would work at the coopering of the day, and then of the night, he would go home and sit around the fireplace and carve out. And I just kind of picked it up from him, I guess. And we used to sit around and carve on raccoons and talk.

Well, since I got graduated out of high school, I've worked mostly here in Sneedville as a teacher's aide in special ed. I do some farming, raise some cattle, a little tobacco and hay. There's just something about working on the land. I really enjoy it. Watching the crops and cattle grow. I stay here because I like the slow, easy way. I like our farm where we live. Been there all my life. Don't know what I would do if I couldn't wake up in the morning and see those ridges, you know. You get used to it, I guess.

I like animals a lot. You can look out, you can see they're everywhere out there on our farm. I carve mostly animals native to this area, like the horse, the mule, the cow, the goat, and raccoons, squirrels, deer. I have made a few things like giraffes, you know. Just whatever people asked for usually. But mostly, they ask for animals around here. That's what I like to do most.

I was working on a rocking horse. I got so intent on what I was doing. You're kind of aware, but then you're not aware of what's going on around you. I was just so intent on it. It was all that was on my mind at that time. And I think you've got to be that way, to a certain extent, if you're going to do a good job.

I use a band saw to just kind of get my form a little bit. The rest I do with a four-blade Buck Creek knife. I usually carve and watch TV at the same time. I usually end up cutting myself and missing half the show. I can make a carving without the band saw, but you wouldn't believe what you would have to charge for it. It takes a long time. So you know, if you had to start out from just a block of wood, it would take so much longer. I guess what these electric tools are doing is saving time and

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Bill Henry

Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Whittler

Born in Gatliff, Ky., in 1929, Bill Henry moved with his parents to Oak Ridge in 1944 when his father took a job with the Manhattan Project. Henry spent his working years as a chemical operator for Union Carbide at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. In his spare time at work, he took up his pocket knife and began carving miniature versions of the hand tools he loves to collect. In 1965, he joined the Southern Highlands Handicraft Guild and began selling his whittled tools to the public. Now he spends a good part of his retirement making an assortment of tiny tools. Included in his repertoire is a jackstraw set consisting of 25 different old-time farm utensils such as mill picks, an apple butter stirrer, a gourd dipper and an anvil surrounded by a complete set of blacksmith's implements.

Well, I call myself a whittler. I don't get offended about folks calling me a carver. I can't seem to get these folks squared away. I think whittling is a very respectable term. I'm not even sure that I could say what the difference is between whittling and carving. Somebody suggested one time that a carver was a whittler with an ego problem. But I don't know if that's true. Mine, as you can see, is all done with pocket knives. My projects are simple, my tools are simple in the extreme, and I just feel like I do things that are indigenous to this region.

I feel very strongly that I learned what I know about it in the most traditional way. I just learned from my natural environment. I was born in a little mining camp, Gatliff, Ky., just a few miles east of Williamsburg. My Dad was a coal miner. Every male had himself a pocket knife. It's just everybody had a pocketknife and whittled whatever they might need. They didn't have time for little whimsical things like this or ornamental things. It was like making a toy maybe for a kid or a tool handle for a tool. They didn't have much money, so they'd make toys for the kids, whittled whistles and sling shots and little carts and wagons and odds and ends like that. That was about the extent of whittling for pleasure.

I feel very strongly about my community of Oak Ridge as a hopefully progressive, concerned citizen. I've lived there a long time. I love the place. I've lived in some awfully grubby places before we came here, and when we came to Oak Ridge, it was the only new home I ever lived in. Consequently, I loved it from the start, and now I never have seen fit to change my way of thinking about it. I just think I'm kind of progressive and interested in what's going on about me.

I worked for Union Carbide for most of my working life. I was just an hourly employee. I had a family to raise and just found the best job I could. There was nothing rewarding about the work I was doing except the people I associated with, they were good folks, and I was paid fairly well. But I was way out of my element. You had these big three-foot concrete walls and three-foot windows, and you've got a set of hands that go up through the wall and down inside. I wouldn't call it creative, and yet it gave you something to do with your hands. But a lot of it was so sophisticated that it was kind of beyond me. I just was working on something that gave no satisfaction, I'm sorry to say. So as soon I could get out, I got out.

Back about 30 years ago, I began to whittle more or less seriously. Prior to then, I had been collecting

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Bill Henry continued

these old tools and implements that are indigenous to the region, and so it was kind of natural that I began to do those things in miniature, I guess. I think tools are very graceful, they're very decorative, and, particularly the early tools, they had a natural line to them. You see an old antique tool, and you can imagine the people who have used them. I just think tools, hand tools especially, are something kind of special. You can imagine all kinds of wonderful things that have been made with them. I'm still learning, but I'm self-taught. I didn't have any formal training in the craft.

When I found out whittling, I realized that I found my place. And it satisfies every little creative urge that I may have ever had. It's very therapeutic and just thoroughly relaxing. In fact, even though I'm retired now, I'm hard put to find all the time I'd want to go to it. You're taking one object, and you're converting it into something else. Just taking a piece of raw wood and hopefully imagining something being in there, you know, and trying to bring it out. And it's creative. It gives me everything except the money. And that's pretty much it. It doesn't pay. I can probably make the minimum wage on the things that I do because I'm reasonably popular, and I've developed a little bit of speed on some of these things.

I don't think there's any special kind of person who buys my work, unless it might be someone who may be middle-aged or beyond and may have something in common with the way I was raised. Remember, these things are archaic and obsolete and rural, and that excites folks. I think we're on a nostalgia kick in this country.

You feel a closeness and a nice warm feeling when folks buy your material. That's a form of acceptance, I think. I think it shows appreciation for what you're doing and the way you're doing it, so it makes you very happy. I've met some awfully wonderful people this way and developed friendships. Because at a show like this, if you have a regular following, people will come back and add different pieces to their collection over the years. And you'd have to be kind of weird not to appreciate that sort of thing.

Renee Stewart continued

wood. You know, you hate to use them, but times have changed from a long time ago. If you're going to do anything with it, you're just going to have to go with it and don't forget your beginnings. You just have to make some sacrifices.

We sell around here to people, and we go to crafts festivals and take orders and just sell to anyone who's really interested. I think I'm the cheapest carver in Tennessee. I'm serious. I go to these places, and these guys have animals the same size as mine. They'll have them double what I'm asking. I've actually had people buy things off of me and give me $5, maybe $10 more than what I asked. I like to price them where if I went to buy them, I could. Of course, that would have to be cheap. It's good, though. It gives you a good feeling when somebody appreciates your work enough, you know. It makes you feel like you might have actually done something right. You know, made something good.

Sometimes I get the feeling—I could be totally wrong here—but I get the feeling that they think I'm different cause I'm a girl, and I carve. "Hey, you're supposed to be an old man doing that carving. You're a girl." And I say, "Yes, I've been that way for a long time." Cause we've got this stereotype, I guess. Over here, these guys on the courthouse steps whittle out little shavings. They don't make anything. They just make shavings. "Oh, you whittle," they say. I say, No, I don't whittle. I *carve*."

I know one thing. As long as I can get the wood and be physically able, I'll always carve. I just enjoy it. It's become a part of my life. And if you really like something, you're going to stay with it. But as far as what I'll do with it, I don't know. Unless times change economically, I couldn't do it full time. It would have to be a second job, like it is now.

BOONESBURG AS EMPIRE

The miss if you blink, stop and it will stink
Old timber town of Boonesburg is growing up,
Why, it is rapidly rising.
I have heard that legions of men and women
Are moving in vast migrations
To that borough of boroughs, that spit across the creek,
Boonesburg.

They are swinging bright banners, settling in stakes
Since the dirt road turned gravel, then quickly to hard road.
Yes, time changes things.
I was sitting on a fruit crate, talking turkey to Ed,
Boonesburg's oldest patron.
I said, "Ed, you have a bank, a go-mart,
A barber shop, and a funeral parlor;
Why Hell, you can take a loan out, buy a six pack,
Get your hair done, and die and be paid for on the same day."

He never laughed.
He just went, "Hmmph."

—Mark Anderson

*Mark Anderson's work has been published in the **Laurel Review, Open Field, The Croton Review, Dialogue,** and the **Connecticut River Review.** Many of his poems deal with the family timber business in West Virginia. He teaches high school English in Ravenswood, W. Va.*

In Search of the Appalachian Quilt

by Laurel Horton

This is a test: Which of these quilts is *Appalachian*?

1. A quilt made by a Nebraska woman living in Berea, Ky.
2. A quilt made by a native of Harlan, Ky., now living in Hawaii.
3. A quilt purchased at an antique mall in Abingdon, Va., or at jockey lot in Pickens, S.C.
4. A quilt designed in New York and made in West Virginia for a store in Washington, D.C.
5. A quilt depicting a mountain sunset made in Florida and exhibited at the Asheville, N.C., Bele Chere Festival.
6. A quilt made by a black woman in Huntsville, Ala.
7. A quilt meticulously modeled after a North Georgia heirloom and made by a young folklorist from Indiana.
8. A quilt made in a Haitian factory for sale in Knoxville, Tenn., department store.

There are no simple answers for this test. These questions are all related to larger issues defining the scope of Appalachia and its culture and are therefore subject to debate. There is no single definition of an Appalachian quilt. However, popular mythology holds that beneath the recent overlay of 20th century culture there lies an Appalachia where traditional skills still flourish as a way of life. Beneath the commercialism, some believe, there are authentic mountain quilts made by authentic mountain women wearing bonnets and colonial dresses.

Several years ago at the North Carolina Quilt Symposium, a Midwestern quilter told me she would be driving back home through the mountains, and could I tell her please where she could stop off to see mountain ladies quilting. She had just spent three full days hobnobbing with hundreds of quilters from all over the country, but she believed that mountain quilters would be on display, perhaps under glass, and available to the tourist. I told her I had a quilt on the frame and that she was welcome to stop by, but the look on her face made it clear that she did not consider me a *true* mountain quilter.

To me the question of whether there are or are not true Appalachian quilters is secondary to the fact that people in and out of the region need to believe that they exist. Tourists thrive on the image of Appalachia as a mirror or remnant of an unspoiled past, and, for obvious economic reasons, the Appalachian tourist industry caters to that image.

Tourists flock to the mountains in search of the true Appalachian quilt. Generally they make sure they find what they expect to find. If they anticipate finding evidence of the fine old-style work of the past, they go to the shops of the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild or other fine galleries and invest in well-made quilts of sophisticated design. If they expect the true mountain quilt to be crudely stitched of mismatched factory ends, they check out the "Quilts for Sale" signs on the two-lane roads until they satisfy their expectations. In both cases the buyers smugly assure themselves of the authenticity of their purchases.

When people find out that I do research on quilts they sometimes say, "Well, you must spend a lot of time up in the mountains." My short answer to this is, "There are lots of quilts in every part of the country." In the long answer I propound a theory, based on admittedly limited data, that quiltmaking traditions have been more stable in some rural areas outside of the mountains, areas not affected by mining, timbering and tourism, which are characterized by outside intrusions and boom and bust cycles. For example, I think that sections of the Piedmont such as Lincolnton, N. C., would be a more rewarding laboratory to study the changes and influences on quilts and quiltmaking over the generations than many of the mountain counties.

Quiltmaking traditions thrive where families and their neighbors remain in place for generations, where social networks are well-established, and where such stability allows for the sharing of patterns and help with quilting. Farming communities of the late 19th and early 20th centuries based their economy on barter and home production. Making quilts instead of buying blankets was the norm in such communities. In mountain counties, the disruptions and dislocations precipitated by the timber and coal industries have interrupted and disturbed the agrarian economy and traditional sense of community within which quiltmaking thrives. Families separated by moves to lumber or coal camps and exchanging labor for wages were more likely to consider purchasing blankets.

As material objects quilts sometimes survive into later generations with stories to tell, if we know how to read the language. Quilts act as a barometer of a community's economic state. When times are good people buy blankets for warmth and new fabric for fancy quilts to use as spreads. When times are harder, they recycle clothing and blankets into utilitarian bedcovers.

Appalachian scholars point out that the mountains encompass many different subcultures rather than a single homogeneous culture. Mountain quiltmaking is no exception. Based upon my research and observations over the last 14 years, textile traditions varied over time and from place to place. For instance, 19th century quilts in Western North Carolina reflect ready availability of manufactured printed fabric. Material was purchased perhaps during trips to sell produce in

Rose of Sharon quilt made by "Aunt Matt" Anderson of Macon County, N.C., mid-19th century. The maker was a live-in seamstress hired in the fall and winter to sew family clothing for Dr. and Mrs. A.C. Brabson and their 11 children. The Babsons lived in the Riverside community south of Franklin. The quilt is expertly made from fashionable calicoes.

Piedmont towns or in the general stores of mountain towns. In contrast, well-to-do farm women in the valleys of Tennessee appear to have relied more heavily on products of their own weaving: plain-woven blankets for warmth and everyday use, and fancy overshot coverlets for special occasions. (Overshot coverlets were woven with a cotton warp and a cotton and dyed wool weft, creating intricate geometric designs.) Both the cotton and wool were available locally.

Tracing my own family's use of bedcovers shows the evolution of materials and methods over several generations. My own great-great-grandmother, Manervia Puckett (later Cockerham), moved with her family from Lee County, Va., to Breathitt County, Ky., in 1843. Her grandson, my great-uncle Glenn McCoun, said that Manervia and her sister became skillful weavers because "they married late, and there wasn't much else to do with their time." I have a fragment from one of her fancy overshot coverlets. We don't know if she also made quilts, but several survive made by her daughter, Sirene Cockerham McCoun.

An early memoir by Robert McAfee, whose family was connected with the McCouns, describes a much earlier bedcovering. While living in Botetourt County, Va., in 1770, Robert's father killed "a very extraordinary large elk." He had the skin dressed and his wife made it into "a most beautiful rug of many colors by sewing woolen yarn into it." Ample enough to cover a bed, the skin was handed down as a family heirloom. "We used to call it 'Old Ellick' and many struggles I used to have in keeping 'Old Ellick' on the bed, especially if the skin was next to the bed. It was, however, as pliant and soft as the neatest dressed deer skin."

This evidence from my own family suggests that in frontier areas bedcovers were supplied by furs and skins. As frontier settlements expanded and game became more scarce, increased commerce with larger towns brought in looms and machine-spun cotton yarn, and women wove blankets and coverlets to replace the rough early bedcovers. By the late 19th century when printed fabric was widely available, mountain women, like their cousins elsewhere, made quilts.

To me, these brief glimpses into the lives of real mountain people are more intriguing than romantic myths. Knowing that Anne McCoun McAfee took the time to decorate 'Old Ellick' with colored yarns demonstrates that our frontier ancestors were individuals who exercised options in their lives. They were not limited by the stereotypes imposed on them by our incomplete perceptions. I think that they would be surprised by our romanticization of their lives. They chose to live in log cabins and to make their own clothing and bedcovers not because it was romantic, but because it was

"Autumn on the Farm," an early example of the pictorial quilts made by Linda Cantrell of Asheville, N.C. Cantrell is well-known for her detailed scenes of mountain life, and she has won a number of prizes in national contests. An Alabama native, she has quilted since 1981 and is a member of the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild and the Asheville Quilt Guild.

practical. When other options, whether house trailers, sewing machines, or Sears bedspreads, became more practical, mountain people incorporated them into their lives. The lives of mountain people changed over time from both local and national influences, and there simply never was a single "authentic" period in which Appalachian culture became fixed. But present-day Americans, in search of connections with earlier generations, gather to themselves objects that symbolize those former strengths and values they perceive will support them through the uncertainties of modern life. By purchasing mountain crafts they create their own heirlooms. Not having suffered the ravages of time, these objects are neat and clean and attractive enough to display in the homes of the purchasers.

A real estate company on the North-South Carolina border has hung a banner advertising "Dreams for Sale." For better or for worse, this is much of what attracts visitors to the mountains. Astute mountain quiltmakers sell dreams, too, or are perhaps, symbolically, the protectors of dreams.

While the quilter today may fulfill some romantic fantasies for tourists, any notion she might have of making a decent living at the craft would remain an impossible romantic fantasy for herself. Even those quilters who fill custom orders at respectable prices count themselves lucky to earn the equivalent of minimum wage. Most quilters, even those who work for hire quilting tops for others, enjoy the work. In some communities quilters meet in church basements and senior centers to quilt to raise money for group projects. Many quilters find it to be a relaxing activity which fits in with watching grandchildren or soap operas, providing a little extra income. One can see this as exploitation of powerless women or as a continuation of traditional quiltmaking (in that the activity is integrated into the daily life of the maker rather than viewed as outside employment).

Other quiltmakers, including younger women, view quiltmaking as a central feature of their lives. These women are more likely to see themselves as artists or as serious hobbyists, and they generally support themselves in some other way. In the mountains as well as in all other parts of the country, groups of quiltmakers form "guilds" to share the social aspects of pattern dissemination, communal work, mutual support and reinforcement, and other characteristic rituals. These also are traditional values, although not limited to mountain culture.

Where can you go to see "mountain ladies quilting"? Probably right in your own community, but don't expect them to be wearing bonnets.

Laurel Horton is a folklorist living in Seneca, S.C. The author of ***Social Fabric: South Carolina's Traditional Quilts*** *and numerous articles, she conducts quilt and folklore research for the McKissick Museum at the University of South Carolina.*

The girls wear long full skirts banded with ribbon. The boys are attired in jeans and open-necked shirts with two ribbons fluttering from their chests. They all circle counterclockwise. To the accompaniment of a drum and a gourd rattle, the Cherokee youngsters do a quick shuffle, then bend over and sway. The dance leader's occasional growls elicit answering growls from the ensemble. From time to time, the boys and girls turn to each other and claw at the air. Using simple but evocative steps, they all do their best imitation of a bear.

The Cherokee HUNGRY FOR THE DANCE

by Jane Harris Woodside

The Cherokee have been caught between two worlds for a very long time now. In the early 19th century, as whites became more and more intent on acquiring the Cherokee's homeland in and around the Appalachian mountains, some Cherokee coped by adopting the more centralized, organized ways of the European-Americans, hoping to head off subjugation with assimilation. But some traditionalists resisted, clinging to their ancient way of life, a culture based upon subsistence agriculture supplemented with hunting and fishing. The Cherokee carried out this way of life in a loose federation of villages organized by clan and operating on values that emphasized harmony over competition, respectful coexistence with nature over attempts at mastery.

Of the small number of North Carolina Cherokee who managed to avoid being forcibly transplanted to Oklahoma by the Federal government in the 1830s, most were traditionalists. The early 20th century brought these traditionalists face to face with white culture, intensifying their exposure to an alien way of life, an exposure already well underway through the influence of missionaries and the introduction of federally-run schools in the 19th century. Depression programs paved the way for processed food, manufactured clothing and other products to enter the Cherokees' lives.

The development of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway in the 1930s attracted tourists from all over the country. An often bizarre tourist industry took root early and still flourishes (although the recently established Museum of the Cherokee Indian and the Oconaluftee Village do their best to present Cherokee history accurately). Various businesses, often white-owned, offer visitors the chance to have their picture taken with Cherokee dressed in Plains Indian garb or to spend their money on attractions promising Christmas in July or "educated" performing bears. A few light industries arrived in the 1950s. All the while, traditions associated with a culture based on subsistence agriculture crumbled as the Native Americans left their farms for outside employment.

Dance is one of the ways that some Cherokee are employing to maintain—or in some cases, to regain—a hold on their ancient way of life. Walker Calhoun, a 71-year old retired factory worker from the Big Cove community, is the individual most responsible for the current revival of traditional Cherokee dance. In addition to chanting and instructing several dance troops, he leads his own group, the Raven Rock Dancers, mostly made up of his own grandchildren.

Calhoun's community of Big Cove is one of the most raditional on the Qualla Boundary reservation. Located 14 miles up into the mountains from Cherokee, N.C., Big Cove is where the Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway meet. Still, it is isolated enough to have escaped the brunt of the tourist industry (although one campground is marked by a larger-than-life-sized statue of Yogi Bear standing in a thicket of rhododendron by a fast-running

stream).

Will West Long, Calhoun's half-uncle, inspired Calhoun with a love of dance in his youth. After a hiatus of about 30 years, Calhoun has once again become involved in teaching traditional Cherokee dance. "I just want to show these young people what we used to do," says Calhoun, whose first language is Cherokee. "A lot of them are just hungry for the dances."

Among those hungry for the dance is Gilliam Jackson, the 37-year old Executive Director of the Cherokee Center for Family Services in Cherokee and a native of Snowbird, another traditional Native American community located about 60 miles from Cherokee in mountainous Graham County. Jackson earned first an education degree from the University of Georgia and later, after teaching and then working in a social service agency, a masters in social work from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

Back in the early 1980s, he and some friends began to retrieve the Cherokee heritage that was rapidly slipping through their fingers. "There's a vacuum when you don't have these things," he says. "I grew up speaking Cherokee, I grew up learning a lot about non-materialistic traditional values and some of the old ways and some of the old practices. But there's still a lot of vacuum, a lot of void that needs to be filled in."

When you ask European-American traditional dancers in this region why they dance, dancers who do old-time square dancing, clogging, flatfooting or buck-dancing, they will tell you about good exercise and good company. When you ask Jackson or Calhoun why Cherokee dance, they speak of a world view and a belief system.

According to the Stone Man myth, the myth most often told to account for the dance's creation, dance begins with song, magical and powerful. Calhoun, who is a master of the rhythmic and forceful chants which accompany dance, explains that when he compared notes with Cherokee dancers on a recent trip to eastern Oklahoma, he realized that "this singing, it's a spiritual thing. They said we can't, we don't understand it. Most of this I say when I'm singing, it don't mean nothing to me. God knows what you sing, but we don't know. Was a gift to them many years ago, nobody knows when, these songs."

The Stone Man is an armor-plated creature who feeds on human livers. Capable of metamorphosis, he lives among the Cherokee as an orphan boy in order to prey upon their children. After several deaths, members of the tribe pinpoint the boy as the murderer, but they proceed cautiously, mindful of the power they are combating. Finally, they devise a plan to weaken and destroy the Stone Man by placing seven menstruating women in his path.

The plan works. But at this point, the fatally weakened Stone Man becomes a very complex figure. For the creature who brought evil and destruction to the tribe is the very same creature who brings salvation by his sacrificial death. Stone Man instructs the Cherokee to burn his body, and as his body is consumed by the flames, they will hear songs which will aid them in all aspects of life, songs for dances which they must learn and teach to their children.

Song and dance, then, were seen as a means of survival. They were a way of both acknowledging and manipulating human beings' intimate connections with both the human and natural worlds. People's actions, especially their dance, affected those worlds in very concrete and immediate ways.

Reflecting their subsistence agricultural base, the Cherokee year was divided into two seasons, winter and summer. Certain dances, such as the Green Corn dance, were performed only in summer since they were associated with crops and vegetation. Winter dances, such as the Eagle and the Bear, were believed to attract cold and death. To perform a dance in other than its appropriate season was to upset the balance and invite catastrophe.

Walker Calhoun and the Raven Rock Dancers performing the Bear Dance at the fall of 1989 session of Western Carolina University's Mountain Heritage Days. Photo by Jonnie Clasen.

Dressed in skins and wooden masks, hunters performed special hunting dances which mimicked the animals they would soon stalk: the deer, the bear, the turkey and the eagle. Such dances were a way of asking the animals to allow the Cherokee to survive by sacrificing themselves. Explains the younger Jackson, "Our belief system held that all the animals were in the spirit world just as we are, and that we needed to give thanks in order to continue receiving the things they gave to us. They were a dance of thanksgiving."

The Cherokee gave their social life expression through the War and Peace Pipe dances, through Victory and Friendship dances. They tried to cope with the intrusion of outsiders through a fascinating form that straddled dance and drama, the Booger dance. Originally, the Native Americans performed the Booger dance as a way of driving away illness and death by ridiculing the witches that brought them. Later, outsiders—whites, blacks and alien Indian tribes—took the place of witches as the carriers of evil. In both cases, the strategy was the same: the Cherokee could deal with a seemingly overwhelming enemy if that enemy were reduced to manageable proportions through ridicule.

In the Booger dance, the audience,

gathered together in a house, sang special songs as the band of Boogers outfitted themselves in special disguises, complete with masks made out of buckeye. Eventually, the menacing Boogers entered the house and took their places on a bench along the wall. A leader of the Booger band and the host of the house party acted as intermediaries between the evil ones and the community. No Booger spoke above a whisper since the actors' identities were to remain a secret.

After hushed conversations between the Booger leader and the host, the audience was informed that the newcomers were Boogers. Next, as percussive music began, each individual character's name was announced, names ranging from the simply descriptive, such as Chinaman or Northerner, to more graphic ones such as Rusty Anus. Each Booger stepped forward to perform a ludicrous solo dance. Finally, the audience requested a specific group dance such as the Bear or Eagle, dances which often incorporated the invader's sexual advances on Cherokee women dancers, and the whole troupe of Boogers performed.

The dance master Walker Calhoun remembers the older form of Booger dance, which was designed to banish witches, being performed when he was in his teens. That was back in the time life was centered on the rural settlement itself. "We didn't go anywhere. We just lived around here." Calhoun, who still lives on his family's homeplace, recalls when the fields along the steep gravel drive leading up to his house were planted in corn, not in the especially tidy rows of Christmas trees as they are now.

The family's 10 children helped their parents provide for most of their own needs, only walking along the dusty road into Cherokee for sugar, coffee, salt and whiskey or sending for such items by the man who drove a wagon and a yoke of steer 35 miles to a Whittier, N.C., train depot. "All the young people, there was nothing much to do but help raise food, and sometimes they'd build a house, a log house. Keep busy. Clear the land, raise corn. That was a way of life."

In his youth dance was still an important and natural part of community life, a respite from the constant demands of farm work. There were special ceremonial dances, such as the Green Corn Dance, which took place on a now overgrown ball field by the Raven's Fork River in August, to celebrate a good harvest. "Women folks cooked the corn, beans, taters, whatever they had, they cooked it, took it down to the ball field, and they called it Dinner on the Grounds," Calhoun says. "And while we was waiting to eat, that's when they done this Green Corn Dance, around this food."

Walker Calhoun holding a sourwood wand of eagle feathers. Photo by Larry Smith.

Twice a month, the community gathered for social dances at his aunt's house. The host would appoint a driver, a sort of master of ceremonies who announced the dances, maintained order, prodded people to participate and made sure that each man had the opportunity to lead a dance. The dance would last all night long.

One of the individuals who helped keep traditional dance alive in Big Cove, who in fact was an important force in fostering community cohesiveness and traditional values in general, was Will West Long. In spite of his education, Long remained on the reservation and farmed. "He chose to live just like the rest of us," notes Calhoun with approval. He organized the community's free labor group, was a traditional healer and

Gilliam Jackson teaching a Johnson City, Tenn., Daisy Scout the Quail Dance at the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services' Old Time Dancing in the Appalachian Mountains Conference last April. Photo by Larry Smith.

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book *Cherokee Dance and Drama*, a book whose publication he did not live to see.

With Long's passing in 1946 at age 77, the dance tradition in Big Cove faded. His nephew Walker Calhoun did not participate in dance again until 1984 when a group of young dancers needed a driver in order to perform at the Joint Council of the Cherokee Nation, the first meeting of the Western and Eastern bands of the Cherokee in Red Clay, Tenn. Calhoun's reputation as a fine singer of dance songs and an expert dancer spread, and soon other groups such as Gilliam Jackson's were enlisting his aid. Eventually, he organized some of his 24 grandchildren into the Raven Rock Dancers, named after the outcrop above his home.

An earlier generation of Cherokee dancers. Photo courtesy of the Museum of the Cherokee Indian.

But the survival of Cherokee traditional dance is not assured. Although dancers do sporadically get together on the reservation, most of the dancing in which Calhoun is involved takes place at festivals such as Western Carolina University's Mountain Heritage Days or at the Southern Dance Traditions Conference sponsored by the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services and the Tennessee Humanities Council. Calhoun would like to see regular dances in relevant to young people. "I don't think our kids that we're teaching nowadays are necessarily understanding the values behind the dance, but in time they do," says Calhoun's student, Jackson, speaking of the animal dances. "Still, we're not using these animals the way we used to. They're not a necessity any more. Maybe it's also time to begin teaching or learning new dances where we continue the tradition of giving thanks, but not necessarily to the beaver or the bear."

Cherokee dance will continue if it manages to walk this tightrope successfully, to maintain that underlying tradition of thanksgiving in new forms. It has a new mission now, a different function than in days past. No longer do dancers put on animal skins in imitation of the animals they are honoring. They all wear clothes decorated in ribbon, a tradition that dates back to the Long Walk of 1972, trying to get my daughter to appreciate what we have. And also, like Walker here, I try to maintain it as long as we can.

"It's possible both to assimilate and to keep some of the traditions. We have a lot of families who are very traditional but who are also very progressive and can interchange between the old world and the new world. But probably the biggest portion of our families in Cherokee today are non-traditional. We're assimilating pretty fast. We're losing, I guess."

But the social worker is not without hope that dance can help preserve the Cherokee's distinct identity. "Any time we are in a dance group, it signifies working together, a whole lot of unity. Because everyone's dancing together. It's all peaceful, it's a lot of joy and a lot of fun too."

Even more promising is the fact that two of Walker Calhoun's grandchildren, 10-year old cousins Tim and Andrea, clearly love to dance. They eagerly volunteer to demonstrate a dance to a visitor. Swaying from side to side and holding a sourwood wand of eagle feathers aloft, they dance with great dignity and great absorption.

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frequently exhorted community members to love one another. "He was a good man all the way around."

And he often hosted community dances. "Will West had a yard where we used to dance. He used to start about this time of the year, the late summer, to practice his dances. People who lived way down this side of Cherokee, they'd have to walk to come to dance and walk back home. That's how interested they were. A lot of people used to go there and practice dance." Long's expertise and love of dance led him to collaborate with two ethnologists, Frank G. Speck and Leonard Broom, in their 1951 book *Cherokee Dance and Drama*, a book whose publication he did not live to see.

With Long's passing in 1946 at age 77, the dance tradition in Big Cove faded. His nephew Walker Calhoun did not participate in dance again until 1984 when a group of young dancers needed a driver in order to perform at the Joint Council of the Cherokee Nation, the first meeting of the Western and Eastern bands of the Cherokee in Red Clay, Tenn. Calhoun's reputation as a fine singer of dance songs and an expert dancer spread, and soon other groups such as Gilliam Jackson's were enlisting his aid. Eventually, he organized some of his 24 grandchildren into the Raven Rock Dancers, named after the outcrop above his home.

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An even more serious problem than the lack of a site is how to make the dances—and the values they embody—relevant to young people. "I don't think our kids that we're teaching nowadays are necessarily understanding the values behind the dance, but in time they do," says Calhoun's student, Jackson, speaking of the animal dances. "Still, we're not using these animals the way we used to. They're not a necessity any more. Maybe it's also time to begin teaching or learning new dances where we continue the tradition of giving thanks, but not necessarily to the beaver or the bear."

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An earlier generation of Cherokee dancers. Photo courtesy of the Museum of the Cherokee Indian.

The younger Jackson, father of a 14-year-old daughter, puts this struggle in personal terms. "I'm trying to get my daughter to appreciate what we have. And also, like Walker here, I try to maintain it as long as we can.

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From This Day Forward amphitheater in Valdese, N.C.

Ingles family graveyard at The Long Way Home theater site in Radford, Va.

Actors putting on Indian makeup for The Long Way Home.

Playing the Past

by Pat Buck

Grant Hardin and Dan Ferguson in hand-to-hand combat as the Cherokees attack Fort Watauga.

Mary Ingles (played by Nichole Zeakes) says goodbye to her sons in The Long Way Home

Ann Pritchard playing Nancy Ward in The Wataugans in Elizabethton, Tenn.

Scenes from Outdoor Historical Dramas

Jennifer Wilson and Lee Mumpower as June and Jack, the two leads of Trail of the Lonesome Pine in Big Stone Gap, Va.

Summer theater nationwide is outdoor theater. The biggest cities have Shakespeare in the park. Sophisticated vacation spots have summer stock in tents and musicals in open-air arenas. And in small towns, summer theater is historical drama, playing to hundreds of thousands of people who may never watch *King Lear* or *A Chorus Line*. The protagonists may be American icons like Daniel Boone or people whose names appear only on roadside historical markers. But the motivation is always the same: to tell the story of a particular place and to tell it where it happened.

At least 17 outdoor historical dramas play in Appalachia. The two oldest and best known, *Unto These Hills* in Cherokee, N.C., and *Horn in the West* in Boone, N.C., rank in longevity just after *The Lost Colony*, the original of the genre, which has played at Manteo, N.C., since 1937. About half of the shows are produced by professional companies, running six nights a week all summer and paying professional actors and technical support, some with union contracts. But none of the shows could have succeeded without the material and moral support of their communities.

In Valdese, N.C., a play that began 22 years ago as high school skits commemorating the founding of the town by Italian religious refugees has become a professional theater recognized by the state arts council. But for its first decade *From This Day Forward* ran as a volunteer production. Its current director Greg Young believes, "You'd be hard pressed to find a family in Valdese that has never had some member involved in the play." The drama's site is owned by the county school board. A local factory donated a turntable that operates one part of the show's triple stage. The county's main newspaper for years has contributed free printing and enthusiastic publicity. This year's production included eight members hired from around the country through Chapel Hill's Institute for Outdoor Drama, and their professionalism was a clear advantage. Yet one lead role was played by a county school teacher with great verve and expertise and another equally well by a Valdese registered nurse. The combination seems to work. *From This Day Forward* became professional without giving up the community participation that created it.

Dramas that have developed from volunteer into professional companies are success stories, but so are the ones that survive as volunteer efforts. *The Wataugans* in Elizabethton, Tenn., has run for 10 seasons, *The Long Way Home* in Radford, Va., for 19, and *Trail of the Lonesome Pine* in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, for 26. Not quite a match for *The Fantasticks* in durability—but close.

"The most exciting thing about this play is that it is completely a community project," says *Lonesome Pine* director Ramond Burgin, who teaches drama at Mountain Empire Community College. The playwright was hired from outside, but all other work—paying for the site, building the amphitheater, the acting, directing and technical work—came from the people of Big Stone Gap and surrounding towns. The project was ramrodded by Clara Lou Kelly, an energetic and civic-minded woman who wanted to see her town's most famous product, the 1908 best-selling novel by John Fox, Jr., put on stage as a counterbalance to the depressing images of Appalachia filling American TV screens in the early 1960s. Her granddaughter now runs the show's box office. The current president of the drama's sponsoring organization, Lonesome Pine Arts and Crafts, Inc., was the first to play "June Tolliver," the drama's female lead. Family tradition and "stubbornness" have kept coal miner Jack MacClanahan in the drama since he was a child when his parents were active in starting it. Over 26 years he has played, he says, "every role but June." He is now general manager.

Radford's experience with *The Long Way Home* is similar. The play is produced at the homestead of its heroine, pioneer woman Mary Draper Ingles, who escaped from Indian captivity and traveled 850 miles through the wilderness to warn her settlement of an impending attack. A direct descendant, Mary Lewis Ingles Jeffries, lived on the site until her death in 1988 and acted in the drama every year since its inception. She personally recruited a number of loyal cast members, including a college professor and a commonwealth attorney. The actors, producer and crew are all local, about half of them high school students, and until last year when two Radford women's persistence resulted in a $30,000 state grant to rebuild the stage, all funds were raised locally. Some two-thirds of the cast come back summer after summer. General manager Richard Buck recalls that when he first met the assistant

Trail of the Lonesome Pine amphitheater.

technical director, "he climbed into my lap." The following summer he stood on a chair to operate the lights. "We grow our own," Buck says of his cast and crew.

Such long-term loyalty is typical in the volunteer dramas. So is family involvement. In Radford, Jane Richmond acts in the show along with her seven children. Holli Mears, publicity director of *Lonesome Pine*, first joined the show five years ago and brought along her oldest son, now eight; his three younger brothers and baby sister have been in it literally all their lives.

The pay is minimal in volunteer dramas (for some, not much more than gas money), and the glory is limited. Then why do people choose to spend their summers tied to rehearsal and performance schedules and sweating in period costumes? Some because they want to keep in touch with former theatrical experience—a bank teller who majored in drama in college, a retired dentist who tap danced professionally as a teenager. A few aspire to become professionals. *The Long Way Home* lists among is former cast members a stand-up comic and actors who have appeared in *Fame* and on the *Cosby* show. But in general, volunteer shows are less of a launching pad for theater careers than the professional dramas are. Most volunteers never expect it to be anything more than a hobby.

Many join up because it is something to do. "I was never one to just sit and watch," says *Wataugans* member Ruby Hardin, "I would rather be doing." At 62 she became lead dancer in the Virginia Reel and the show's choreographer. Some founding members of *Trail of the Lonesome Pine* attribute the high level of community support that fuels the drama to the fact that there just isn't much else to do in a small town in the summer, especially for young people. "We keep them busy," says Richard Buck of the younger members of *The Long Way Home*, "and it makes their summer."

Most of all, it's fun, as anyone who has ever trod a stage can tell you—fun to pretend and fun to be watched and feel like a celebrity. For a 10-year-old, what could beat the thrill of being asked for an autograph? As part of a group propelled by mutual dependence and admiration, companies come to feel like families. "They really do it for love," says Barbara Polly, president of Lonesome Pine Arts and Crafts, "love of theater and love of community."

Backstage at From This Day Forward

In the theater world, outdoor drama is still often seen as a second-class citizen. Professional actors, if pressed, may mumble sheepishly that, yes, their first job was in outdoor historical drama. The low status may be due in part to the genre's amateur origins—or perhaps to its reliance on gun battles and massacres, crowd scenes and dancing to stir an audience—or to the difficulty of creating unified stories and credible characters out of the muddle and sprawl of history. But none of this detracts from outdoor drama's legitimacy as a theatrical experience or theatrical art, according to *The Long Way Home's* director, GeorgAnne Voland-DuBois. The only obstacle to the acceptance and development of outdoor drama, as she discerningly explains, is that "it can't be studied. You can't take it to the people—the people have to come to it." Its very strength is a limitation. Its vital bond to its site keeps it from being better known, prevents it from being staged and refined by the big names of New York and Los Angeles, and thus keeps it out of the canon of theater literature.

There are, of course, special problems in producing a play outdoors. Voices must be louder and gestures larger than life. There are bugs and bats to ignore and outdoor noises to compete with. At an in-town site, the sound of sirens or trucks shifting gears will occasionally drown out dialogue. When I stage-managed *The Wataugans*, CB transmissions routinely broke through on the walkie-talkie band that linked me with the director. And even in the most pastoral setting, there are bullfrogs and the piercing cicadas of August.

Weather is a constant threat. Stages and sets that stand open to the sky year-round continually need repair. A rainy summer can decimate a drama's season, especially one of the smaller dramas with a limited run. Even *lack* of rain can be trouble. The drought of 1988 played havoc with *The Wataugans* set, when a corn field planted as cover for Indians in ambush never grew over three feet tall.

For actors, there are some advantages—mistakes are easier to cover, and on the large stages there is less worry about exactly where to stand and how far to move around. Actors talk about a feeling of expansiveness that liberates performance. One young actress told me, "I feel more free outdoors—it makes me calm."

And the calm of an open-air setting contributes to the audience's experience as well. Drama professor John Welton of Carson-Newman College calls it "almost a worship experience," to be gathered under the sky to celebrate culture heroes and common values, just as the Greeks

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Pat Buck became interested in regional outdoor drama while stage managing ***The Wataugans*** *in the town where she lived for 12 years, Elizabethton, Tenn. She is now studying for a Ph.D. in English at Indiana University.*

did in the aboriginal theater. The audience is making "a pilgrimage," says Welton, "to discover what has happened in this place."

An outdoor drama's audience gets education, awe, and entertainment; meanwhile, the town that puts it on gets money. Nationwide, outdoor dramas contribute millions in tourism dollars. It is not surprising that vacation magnets like Boone and Cherokee draw large tourist audiences, but even small-town dramas play to audiences that are three-fourths tourists. Economic potential is a major motivation, for instance, for Jonesborough, Tenn., which is gearing up to produce a professional drama that they hope will rival *Horn in the West*.

The average life-span of an outdoor drama is only seven years, so the benefits for economic development are hardly a sure thing. But even if financial success proves elusive, there is benefit to a community in seeing its own heritage articulated, crystallized and authenticated by art. In 1969, Carson-Newman College developed an outdoor drama in Sneedville, Tenn., as a way to bring revenue to a county without industrial development, but with great natural beauty and a fascinating history in its unique ethnic group, the Melungeons. *Walk Toward the Sunset* was one of the best plays of the genre, according to folklorist Ambrose Manning, who has studied and taught seminars on outdoor drama. But the drama ceased production in 1976, mainly because Sneedville had no motels, only one cafe, and no four-lane access roads. "It was a miracle," says John Welton, who directed the drama, "that it lasted that long." The reason it did last was its importance to the people who put it on. Welton believes it provided more for Hancock County's sense of itself—of the uniqueness, significance and legitimacy of its heritage—than it ever provided economically. As with all the outdoor dramas, a particular place was able to depict its particular contribution to American history and to affirm its continuity with our history as a people.

OUTDOOR HISTORICAL DRAMAS IN APPALACHIA

P = Professional, V = Volunteer

V ***The Aracoma Story.*** Romance of an Indian princess and a white officer. The Aracoma Story, Inc., Box 2016, Logan, WV 25601. 304-752-0253.

P ***From This Day Forward*** Religious persecution of the ethnic Italian Waldenses in 17th-century France, and their 19th-century emigration to North Carolina. Old Colony Players, Inc., Box 112, Valdese, NC 28690 704-874-0176

P ***Hatfields and McCoys.*** The famous feud In repertory with *Honey in the Rock*, a Civil War story. Theatre West Virginia, Box 1205, Beckley, WV 28502 304-253-8313

P ***Horn in the West.*** Daniel Boone and the Revolutionary-era settlement of the mountains Southern Appalachian Historical Association, Inc., Box 295, Boone, NC 28607 704-264-2120

P ***The Jenny Wiley Story.*** In repertory with Broadway shows. Jenny Wiley Drama Association, Inc., Box 22, Prestonsburg, KY 41653 606-886-9274.

P ***The Legend of Daniel Boone.*** Fort Harrod Drama Productions, Inc., Box 365, Harrodsburg, KY 40330 606-734-3346.

V ***The Legend of Hog Greer.*** A mountain hermit who terrorizes a town. Heritage Players, Rt. 3, Box 711C, Erwin, TN 37650 615-753-8238.

V ***The Long Way Home.*** Story of a woman's survival during the French and Indian War The Long Way Home, Inc., Box 711, Radford, VA 24141. 703-639-0679

P ***The Lost State: A Frontier Chronicle.*** Early Tennessee history. To open summer 1991. The Lost State of Franklin Drama Association, 212 E Main St , Jonesborough, TN 37659.

V ***McNeill's Rangers.*** A Civil War incident McNeill's Rangers, Inc., Box 144, Keyser, WV 26726. 304-788-1752.

V ***Prickett's Fort: An American Frontier Musical.*** Pre-Revolutionary settlement In repertory, starting 1990, with a drama on West Virginia coalfields. Prickett's Fort Memorial Foundation, Inc., Rt. 3, Fairmont, WV 26554. 304-363-3030

The Reach of Song. History of Hiawassee, Georgia. Box 1720, Gainesville, GA 30503. 404-536-3431.

P ***The Stephen Foster Story.*** The Stephen Foster Drama Association, Inc . Box 546, Bardstown, KY 40004. 1-800-626-1563.

P ***Stonewall Country.*** A Civil War drama In repertory with ***Muncimeg*** and ***Ear Rings***, two dramas based on mountain folk tales. Lime Kiln Arts, Box 663, Lexington, VA 24450. 703-463-7088.

V ***Trail of the Lonesome Pine.*** Clash of cultures during 1890's industrialization Lonesome Pine Arts and Crafts, Inc., Box 1976, Big Stone Gap, VA 24219. 703-523-6307.

P ***Unto These Hills.*** History of the Cherokees from DeSoto's explorations to the Removal Cherokee Historical Association, Box 398, Cherokee, NC 28719 704-497-2111

V ***The Wataugans.*** Early Tennessee settlement and the Overmountain Men of the Revolutionary War. Sycamore Shoals Park, Elizabethton, TN 37643. 615-543-5808.

ARTS IN APPALACHIA

NOW AND THEN

I grew up in the mountains of Whittier. I've been making baskets ever since I was small. I helped my parents make baskets to trade for food at the end of the Depression.

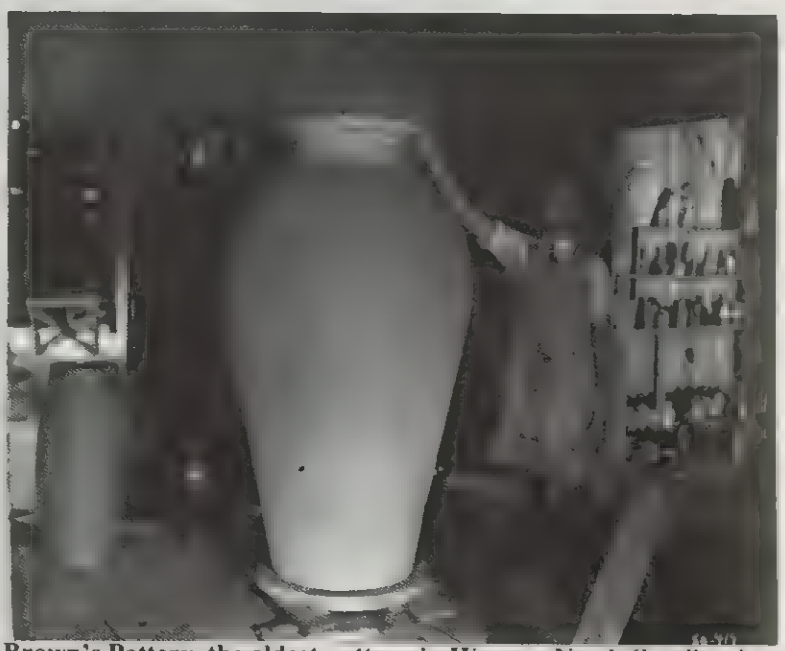
I'm doing this because I'm trying to hang onto something that's going to vanish. You've got to gather grown trees and bust them up. I still make the splits following the grains of the wood. These are our tools, a kitchen knife and a pocket knife. I don't even use commercial dyes; I use natural dyes.

You lose everything by using shortcuts. You become like everybody else. The Indians are dying, and so is the basket. If you take shortcuts, that's what happens.

—Nancy Conseen

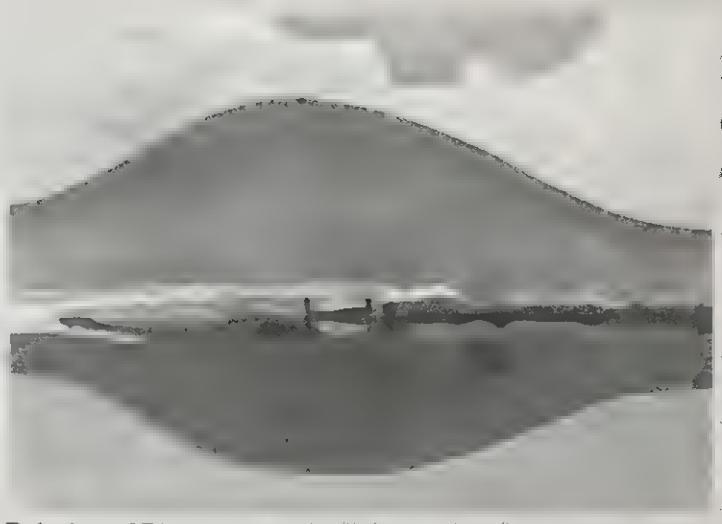
Basketmaker Nancy Conseen, an educational demonstrator at the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild Fair in Asheville, N.C. She also works as a demonstrator at the living model of a 19th century Cherokee community, the Oconoluftee Village in Cherokee, N.C., and she teaches and lectures.

Dolls by Ellen Turner of Horseshoe, N.C., at the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild gallery on the Blue Ridge Parkway. The dolls are images of people remembered by Turner from her childhood. Photo by Michael Joslin.



Brown's Pottery, the oldest pottery in Western North Carolina, has been on the banks of the French Broad River south of Asheville for more than 100 years. Photo from the Southern Highlands Research Center at the University of North Carolina at Asheville.

Farm woman making a hooked rug, Davie County, N.C., 1937. From the National Archives.



Courtesy of Anni Albers and The Josef Albers Foundation

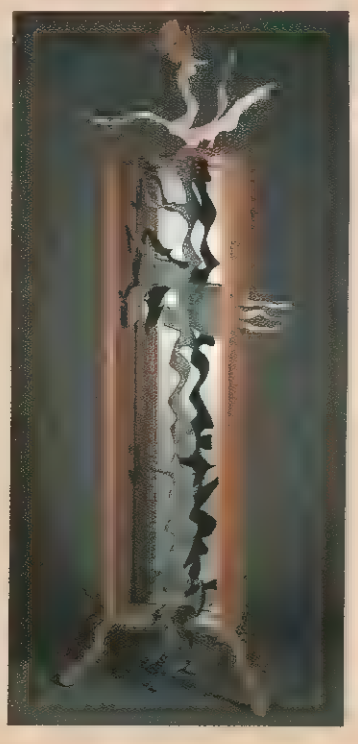
Painting of Black Mountain College, 1945, by Amedee Ozenfant, the founder of the Purist movement in France. Black Mountain College, a small experimental art school in North Carolina, opened in 1933 and closed in 1954. During the years it operated, it attracted world-renowned artists, many of whom were escaping the Depression and then the war in Europe. Ozenfant described the college as "a petite university, isolated in nature like a Benedictine Abbey." *The Arts at Black Mountain College* by Mary Emma Harris is reviewed on page 58.

Sally Browning's Craft Shop in the lower Cherokee Village of the Cherokee Indian Reservation in North Carolina. Browning is showing a basket to a tourist. From the record of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1909-1957, National Archives.

ARTS IN APPALACHIA

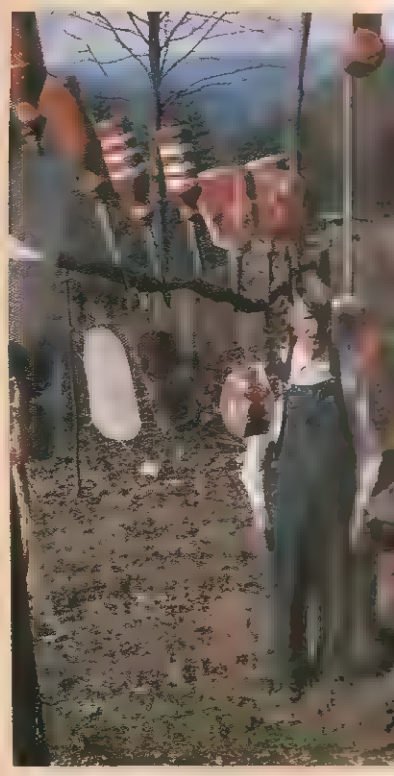
NOW AND THEN

Some nights I close my eyes to go to sleep, and there will appear on my eyelids a vision of one of these dolls. It won't go away, and I have to get up and draw it out on paper or get a piece of wood and start making it.
—Bessie Harvey



"Wallflower," cherrywood sculpture by Tim Murray, 1984. Murray was born in England, reared near Winston-Salem, N.C., attended Mars Hill College and the University of North Carolina and has been teaching art at Brevard College in Brevard, N.C., since 1963. He shows his work widely in the Southeast. Photo by Alex Hughes.

"Little Mama," sculpture by Bessie Harvey, Alcoa, Tenn., 1988. Her one-woman show, "Spirit Visions," was featured during Black History Month at the Carroll Reece Museum at East Tennessee State University this year. The sculpture is from the Museum's permanent collection.



Charley Williams of Sevierville, Te making whirlygigs and painting fo after his children gave him a paint birthday. He never sold his work, produced it for his own enjoyment. fieldwork by Susan Bitner, 1974.

l Risk," fiber/basketry construction by Margaret Gregg, borough, Tenn., 1984. A studio artist in East Tennessee for more than rs, Gregg's output is diverse. She produces quilted wallhangings, , clothing, sculptures, many encompassing socially conscious and unity themes. She has studied art at Penland, Arrowmont and the Centre for the Fine Arts in Alberta, Canada. Currently she is ng for a masters in fine art from East Tennessee State University.

Broom maker Ralph Gates at the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild Fair in Asheville, N.C. Gates learned the craft from Pop Ogle in Gatlinburg 18 years ago. He lives east of Asheville in Big Sandy Mush.

I was a systems engineer at Cape Kennedy. I decided I wanted something different, something that would include fun and travel and that could support my family.

We're on the leading edge of a new art form with broom making. You're going to see the weirdest strangest things you ever saw in the next 15 to 20 years.

—Ralph Gates

An artist was all I ever wanted to be from the time I was a child. Art is not a good career move; I'm sure it seemed puzzling to my family, but they tried to be supportive.

I've been doing nudes for 30 years. My mom used to ask, "Why don't you put a little dress on them?" She's even getting used to them.

—Diane White-Gibson

***From the Garden to the Sky, Adonis meets Evita* by Diane White-Gibson, Huntington, W. Va., 1989. From the West Virginia Juried Exhibition at the Cultural Center in Charleston. White-Gibson, who received a masters of art from Marshall University in Huntington in 1977, shows her work widely in the area and is represented by the Tomlyn Gallery in Jupiter, Fla., as well. She works in a therapeutic art program for adult patients at Huntington State Hospital.**

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Beula Ogle preparing warp for weaving at the Pi Beta Phi Settlement School, Gatlinburg, Tenn., 1933. Photo by Lewis Hine. From the National Archives.

Missionaries for Appalachian Arts

by Bernice A. Stevens

Endless stories have been told about heroic Appalachian women—about the Tall Woman, as Wilma Dykeman calls her There must be thousands of untold stories of those women who lived meager lives, yet managed to rear large families against almost insurmountable odds, and often gave the world citizens of talent, integrity and great worth.

There was another group of women who had much to do with the development of Appalachian culture: a small army of women, really, though they came one by one or two by two and often did not realize the existence of their fellows. Many of these women contributed to the resurrection and development of mountain crafts, and so to the tremendous proliferation of crafts in the area today.

In the latter part of the last century and the early years of the present one, women were beginning to wake up and realize that they could have a place in world affairs. A few women, like Carrie Nation, Mother Jones and Jane Addams, broke from the pattern of marriage-and-babies or quiet spinsterhood to follow their individual stars. Yet most women considered the traditional to be the norm and followed the system without protest in spite of the women's suffrage movement. But women knew of the struggles of their braver sisters, and a kind of social conscience was developing among them. This was particularly true of college women who, taking a four-year break from tradition and family, learned more of what went on in the world and began to consider their possible responsibilities.

It became the custom of many college women to devote a year or two of their lives after graduation to some worthy social cause. For most, this period of time, interesting but soon over, remained in their minds as a wistful memory for the rest of their conventional lives. But a few discovered work that was so satisfying that they never left it. Some of these women came to the Southern mountains. Some were sent by their churches, missionaries in their own land. Some were educators. Some were young women eager for adventure. Some were humanitarians, interested in the welfare of their own kind. Some came almost by chance—perhaps they heard a lecture at morning chapel that stirred them to action or read an article in one of the more intellectual magazines that urged them to do something useful in the world. Those who came to the mountains found plenty to do.

It must have been a shock to a young woman from a reasonably affluent family to be suddenly in the midst of a culture that knew little about contemporary plumbing, sanitation, health care, heating and transportation. But the more serious among them were valiant women, and when they saw the economic, cultural and educational poverty in the mountains, they threw all their considerable energies into finding ways to help.

There were many opportunities. They found ways to teach improved methods of caring for children, of cooking and gardening. But the major need was economic. And the people of Appalachia were a proud lot; anyone who wanted to serve them had to find ways to help them help themselves.

One of the ways that the newcomers found was through something the mountaineers considered mundane and unimportant. The women found that their hosts were accomplished craftspeople.

An early mountain man took it for granted that he built his own cabin, made the family furniture, perhaps including a loom for his wife, and carved useable trenchers or plates and spoons for tableware. His wife, of course, wove material for jeans, dresses, shirts and even coats, and she wove "kiverlids" or pieced quilts for the beds. When the women from afar saw the beautiful handmade objects in the mountain cabins, they were impressed—and inspired.

Even before the turn of the century, however, the outside world had crept into the mountains to some extent. While there were few roads worthy of the name, several railroad lines had been built, and mining companies had discovered how rich in coal were the highlands. Some "store-boughten" goods were available in the larger settlements, and many mountain women had discarded spinning wheel and loom in favor of material bought in the settlement or company store. Some of these women had never known how to weave. But they all still treasured the coverlets and quilts that they or their mothers or grandmothers had made.

Admiration is a fine basis for friendship, and mountain people responded to the obvious appreciation of the newcomers. It was a reasonably easy step to convince the highlanders that a partial solution to their poverty might lie in the production and sale of mountain crafts.

In various parts of the highlands, "furriners," as the highlanders called them, came to this solution individually, and it was some time before there was any organized effort to develop native crafts.

Probably the first organized effort to

help mountain people through their crafts was made by Frances L. Goodrich, of Ohio, who, in 1890, was sent by the Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church to live among the mountain people and to find ways to enrich their lives, especially those of the women. She settled in Britain's Cove, N.C., 12 miles from Asheville.

Goodrich and a friend who accompanied her were friendly women, and they soon established a good relationship with their neighbors. One of the local women, Mrs. Almeda Walker, thought so much of Goodrich that she gave her a beautiful coverlet, along with its weaving draft. Goodrich was so pleased with the gift and so intrigued with the draft, which made her think of written music, that she determined to learn all about weaving. Her enthusiasm inspired the women in the community to bring out old looms and old drafts and to revive their mothers' and grandmothers' craft.

Goodrich found markets in the North for their work and also established a local shop. She moved to a settlement called Allan's Old Stand and called her craft business Allanstand. When she moved to Asheville and started a shop there, she kept the name of Allanstand. Other crafts were added to the weaving: vegetable dyeing, basketry, woodworking, woodcarving, rug hooking, feather work.

But Allanstand wasn't the only place where things were happening. Frances Goodrich's story, with variations, was being enacted in other parts of Appalachia.

In Kentucky, two women, Katherine Pettit and May Stone, at the request of mountain people near Hindman, held "camps" at various places in the area for three summers. These camps were designed to teach both children and adults. The mountain women were especially interested to learn different methods of cooking, housekeeping and child care. Classes in many subjects were held for the children, and the mountain people began to ask their new teachers for a full-time school for the children.

Pettit and Stone had no training as teachers and no source of large amounts of money, so they dodged the issue as long as they could. However, in 1902 they started the Hindman Settlement School for children. They also continued adult classes encouraging the revival of old mountain crafts. Hindman was especially known for its fine basketmakers, although it also had good weavers and woodworkers and several fine makers of dulcimers.

Elizabeth Watts of Andover, Mass., followed the two founders as director of the school, and she continued to encourage craft work. A shop was established on the school grounds, and visitors to the school were good customers. There were orders to be filled, too, from all over the country. Watts directed the school for 47 years.

In 1912, the Pi Beta Phi Fraternity, an organization of college and university women, was looking for an altruistic project. Their attention was called to the educational needs of the children of Appalachia. After much investigation and preparation, they established the Pi Beta Phi Settlement School at Gatlinburg, Tenn., then little more than a mountain crossroads.

The school was for children of grade school and high school age, but the women who ran it soon became interested in the crafts of the area. Before long, they had quite a group of craftspeople bringing in their baskets, weaving, cornshuck dolls and mats, woodcarvings and woodwork. They eventually found ways to market these things. They established a shop on the school grounds, and it faced the main street of Gatlinburg, which was fast becoming a tourist town. And they started a mail-order business, supplying all their members with catalogs and developing a large clientele.

Evelyn Bishop, known to generations of Pi Beta Phi students and Gatlinburg townspeople as Miss Evelyn, was the daughter of the president of a small college in nearby Sevierville. She directed the school for 16 of its most crucial years, 1918-1934. She not only promoted crafts but also was interested in the traditional music of the mountains. A talented musician, she sang mountain ballads with great charm. Encouraging both children and adults to sing and love and remember the old songs, she did much towards preserving them as a part of the culture of the area.

Early in Bishop's administration, she employed a weaving designer, Winogene Redding, to oversee and direct the weaving done for the shop. "Gene" developed a group of almost 100 weavers who supplied the shop and mail-order customers. Redding used many of traditional patterns in her designs but varied them with contemporary patterns.

But Redding didn't stop with designing and directing. She became friends with all her weavers and a frequent guest in their homes. She taught them much besides weaving. She showed them different ways of cooking, how to make ornaments and decorate a Christmas tree and how to make their homes more attractive. She took them on short trips, widening the horizons of women who had never been farther from their mountain cabins than the little town of Gatlinburg. She even helped them write and produce a play, which tourists loved.

The school staff encouraged other crafts besides weaving. There were excellent basketmakers in the area and many fine woodworkers and workers with such materials as corn shucks. The sales shop, which was called Arrowcraft, stocked the products of these craftspeople.

In 1936, Marian Heard was invited to come to the University of Tennessee in Knoxville to start a craft department. A native of New York State, Heard was a sophisticated young woman just out of college, but she had no idea what she might find in Tennessee. She came with some trepidation and certainly didn't intend to stay long. She did stay, developing one of the earliest and finest craft departments in any university or college and when Pi Beta Phi Fraternity and UT's Home Economics Department decided to collaborate on starting a summer school of crafts, using the Pi Beta Phi facilities at Gatlinburg, Heard soon became head of the project and so remained until her retirement in 1977.

In North Carolina, besides

Bernice A. Stevens is the author of ***A Weavin' Woman,*** *the story of Clem Douglas, an early craft worker of North Carolina;* ***To an Earth Beloved,*** *a book of poems illustrated by Alice E. Zimmerman; and a series of craft guide books for her Gatlinburg neighborhood. She has also written a book-length manuscript,* ***In Praise of Valiant Women,*** *an account of the lives and work of some of the women mentioned herein.*

Goodrich's Allanstand Industries, other important craft projects got started in the early 1920s, and all were started by women.

Penland Weavers and Potters was the creation of Lucy Morgan, who has told her story in a book, *Gift From the Hills*, with LeGette Blythe, published by Bobbs-Merrill in 1938. Morgan was one of the few of these dedicated women who was from the mountains herself. She left a teaching job in Chicago to teach at her brother's school, the Appalachian School at Penland. But she wasn't sure she was going to stay—Chicago had been so exciting. She not only stayed, she became so interested in the possibilities of weaving in that area that she went to Berea College in Kentucky to learn how to weave. Thereafter she interested many women near the school in weaving. She established a sales shop and weaving studio, and encouraged the mountain people to produce and sell there. There was a good group of potters as well as weavers, and many other traditional crafts, such as basketry, rug-hooking, woodwork and shuckery, were represented there.

Morgan was a natural leader, and the school flourished. Started in 1923 for mountain people, it was soon accepting students from various parts of the country and attracting some excellent teachers.

Among her ventures and adventures was her Chicago World's Fair project. In 1933, Chicago held its world fair, the Century of Progress. Morgan and her cohorts at Penland decided the fair wouldn't be complete without something from the Appalachians, and they planned an exhibit of Penland crafts. The fair wasn't much interested in giving space to such an unheard-of thing, but Morgan persisted. Against what would have been insuperable odds to anyone but Morgan, she managed to get a small, inconvenient space, and there she and her co-workers parked a log cabin they had made and brought all the way from Penland as a trailer behind a truck. They had constructed another cabin too, this one so made that its pieces could be hauled there and put together on the grounds. When the two were set up, a large craft exhibit was arranged in them. Hundreds of people, fascinated by something so unique, came, visited and bought. Morgan did much to tell the country the story of Appalachia, its problems and its crafts. Also, this project pulled Penland out of a deep slough of debt.

Just a year after Morgan started Penland Weavers and Potters in 1924, Clementine Douglas, a native of Florida, opened a craft shop and weaving studio in Asheville, N.C. Douglas had been working with the mountain people for some years, especially with the women, and she gathered around her a group of weavers who made things for the shop, which she named the Spinning Wheel. It was a charming log cabin filled with all the traditional mountain crafts. Here tourists could not only buy but see demonstrations of weaving and vegetable-dyeing.

Douglas herself was a much-loved character who, besides designing things for her weavers to make, undertook to educate them in many fields. One of the weavers still remembers how happy they all were in the studio, where they discussed everything from mountain cabins to world affairs. The Spinning Wheel was an Asheville landmark for almost 25 years. As a result of her work with mountain people and crafts, Douglas was sent by the State Department to both Haiti and Hawaii to work on craft projects.

Mrs. James Watson, 65, spinning wool yarn in her mountain cabin for the weavers at the Pi Beta Phi Settlement School in Gatlinburg. Photo by Lewis W. Hine in 1933. From the National Archives.

In 1925, Olive Dame Campbell and Marguerite Butler (Bidstrup) started, at the community's request, the John C. Campbell Folk School at Brasstown, N.C. The school was named in memory of Campbell's husband. The couple had explored the Southern Appalachians, trying to work out a way to be of service to the mountain people. Mr. Campbell died before any plans could be completed.

Campbell, with Butler, visited the folk schools of Scandinavia, and, while there, decided that this was the kind of school that was needed in the mountains at home. She and Butler selected Brasstown from among several mountain communities that were anxious to have such a school.

The Folk School, fashioned to some extent after its Scandinavian counterparts, was not designed for children but aimed to enrich the lives of the adults of the community, and to teach them to be happy and contented citizens of their mountain land. There were classes and discussion groups on everything from how to make a farm more productive to folk dancing to weaving to world affairs. Like most similar ventures, it was often on the ragged edge of bankruptcy, but it was staffed by intrepid, believing people, and some way was always found to continue its work.

Crafts were of paramount importance. Building upon what the founders saw as the mountaineers' natural ability to use their hands and upon their long history of craft work, the school developed a group of weavers and woodworkers. It was best known—and is to the present day—for its woodcarvings. Campbell herself started the carving but soon employed Murriel Galt (Martin) to head this project. Galt developed a group of excellent carvers, and its carvings are the school's chief claim to craft fame. She established a sales shop on the school grounds and developed a mail-order business. The school also sold its prod-

ucts in craft shops in the Highland area.

Early in the history of the school, Louise Pitman of New Jersey joined the staff. Pitman came from a well-to-do family. After her college graduation, her father sent her and her sister to Europe for a year. Upon her return home, Louise found that she was unhappy with nothing to do; she wanted to be useful. Hearing that there was a small new folk school down in North Carolina—her mother's home state—she decided to try working there for maybe a year. She stayed 17. Pitman was one of the early workers with vegetable—or natural—dyes, and she dyed the yarns for the weavers in the area. Later, she became director of the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild and served in this capacity for 10 of its fast-growing years.

These are only a few of the women who helped save mountain crafts, encouraged the development of these and more contemporary crafts, and established craft markets.

The most ambitious project that they undertook was the formation of the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild.

In 1912, John C. Campbell had organized the Conference of Southern Mountain Workers, hoping to unite the efforts of the many mountain workers he and his wife had met in their travels through the highlands. The organization met once a year, and mountain workers flocked to the meetings, eager to share their ideas and their problems.

Many of those who attended were working with crafts, and these artisans tended to get together to discuss their particular problems. Chief among these problems was marketing, and a close second was how to set and maintain standards.

A group formed within the larger group, and they decided to have a special meeting and consider starting a separate organization. At their first meeting at Penland, the group definitely decided to form such an organization for the promotion and marketing of crafts, and some tentative plans were made. At the second meeting, it was decided to call the organization the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild. Attending this meeting were Olive Dame Campbell, Lucy Morgan and Evelyn Bishop. Also present were Dr. Mary Sloop of the Crossnore School, Crossnore, N.C., Wilmer Stone Viner of the Weave Shop in Saluda, N.C., Helen Dingman of Berea, Ky., Clem Douglas of the Spinning Wheel in Asheville, N.C., and Allen Eaton of the Russell Sage Foundation, who later wrote the book *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands*. Eaton, the only man at this meeting, was deeply interested in crafts and was friend to the Guild as long as he lived, helping to arrange and set up exhibits and always ready with advice for the struggling organization.

Most of the women who revitalized the crafts in the Southern Mountains are gone, but the proliferation of crafts in present day Appalachia is based upon their work. Many of the schools and organizations they founded still flourish, though their focus may have changed to fit a changing world.

Frances Goodrich gave her Allanstand Shop to the Guild in 1931, and although the original shop is no longer in existence, Allanstand is alive and well as the retail shop at the Guild's Folk Art Center on the Blue Ridge Parkway just out of Asheville.

Hindman no longer emphasizes crafts, though it still has some craftspeople, but it is still in the business

Portrait of Change
The Southern Highland Handicraft Guild

At the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild Fair in Asheville, N.C., this summer, ***Now and Then*** *spoke with two of the organization's former administrators, Robert Gray and Garry Barker. Gray, who was originally trained as a potter, was the Guild's director from 1961 to 1984. He now does consulting for craft organizations all up and down the East Coast and lives in Asheville. Barker worked for the Guild as the Assistant Director from 1965 to 1970. He is now assistant director and marketing manager of the student crafts program at Berea College in Kentucky. His book about crafts in Appalachia,* ***From Whimmydiddles to Where We Are: Handcraft Revival in Southern Appalachia****, should come out next year.*

The men showed ***Now and Then*** *editor Pat Arnow and associate editor Jane Woodside to a lounge area for craftspeople, and as the fair bustled behind us, we sat around a table while they gave us their perspective on the Guild's progress and changes over the years.*

N&T: How do you like the direction you see the Guild taking?

GRAY: I'm sorry to see the Guild changing from having a majority of rural traditional craftspeople to having mostly university-trained professional artists. The reason for the change is the emphasis on marketing and because of the Folk Art Center they built on the Blue Ridge Parkway. It was opened in 1980. It took 14 years to raise the money. It was a dream. Some people never have a dream, but I did, and I lived to see it. Eleven million people come by that spot every year. We entice about 600,000 into the Folk Art Center annually.

N&T: That's a national audience?

GRAY: Yes.

BARKER: The first year I came to work, the Guild sold maybe $350,000 worth of work. That was 1965. Now, it's $2-million, $2.5-million. Most of that growth took place from the early 60s through about 1980.

N&T: And you started with traditional crafts?

GRAY: Yes. When I came down here, it was primarily mountain crafts.

N&T: And you said rural people were practicing those crafts?

GRAY: Yes. Well, that was why the Guild was started in 1930 by a group of people who were running different settlement schools. They were trying to get income for those people who lived in the communities.

BARKER: Part of what happened was economics. The people in the mountains here and Eastern Kentucky were having to live in a cash economy and didn't have any cash.

GRAY: They were marketing the products that these mountain people made—the quilts, coverlets, carved animals and cornshuck dolls. Our four

of helping mountain people and others to a better life. Its present emphasis is upon developing supplementary programs for the public schools and furnishing the facilities for community and regional activities. Hindman is also doing some important work with dyslexics.

Elizabeth Watts, an early director of the school is today, at age 99, still interested in all phases of the school's work.

Pi Beta Phi has gone in two different directions. Arrowmont, as the school which the organization founded is now called, holds workshops in traditional and contemporary crafts. Students come to it from all over the country and from several foreign countries. Besides this, the Pi Beta Phi Fraternity still maintains its sales shop, Arrowcraft, a flourishing business that sells the crafts of the mountain area.

Penland is no longer a weaving center for mountain women. It is known as one of the most progressive craft schools in the country.

The Folk School founded by Olive Dame Campbell in Brasstown, N.C., still teaches woodcarving, weaving, and many other crafts, but its students come now from every state in the union. And area craftspeople still produce woodcarvings, weavings, metal work and other crafts, sold in their sales shop on the grounds.

The Southern Highland Handicraft Guild that started in 1930 with a handful of members, now has more than 600 members, four sales shops, a training program and a large, handsome building in the Blue Ridge Parkway near Asheville that houses offices and excellent exhibits as well as a huge sales room. The Guild also stages two enormous craft fairs each year.

shops and two annual fairs really promoted it. We'd bring in around 50,000 people a year.

N&T: Was this aimed at tourists?

GRAY: Yes, we maximized sales by using peak seasons of the tourist market for our two fairs—in Asheville, that was July, and in Gatlinburg, it was October. We used to have two trailer-loads of equipment that we set up. We'd furnish the booths and the lights, and we'd furnish them with a change box with $25 change every morning. We'd have the bookkeeper do all the bookkeeping, pay the taxes for them because some of them just couldn't afford to.

The difference now is that each craftsman has to furnish his own booth material and pay a booth fee of $200 or $250. Some of the traditional craftspeople would only sell $100 worth, and they couldn't afford a van and a booth.

BARKER: Up through the 70s, what we were dealing with was rural people who did crafts and didn't have much idea about what the market was about. But what we're dealing with now is craft professionals. Usually they've gone to college. It's a whole different atmosphere. There's some three people in this building that were in booths the first year I was here. There's that much of a turnover.

N&T: When you first came, can you estimate roughly what portion of the craftsmen were traditional?

GRAY: Probably 80 percent of them were.

N&T: When you left?

GRAY: Well, it's probably almost reversed now.

N&T: How do both of you feel about that?

GRAY: Well, I felt that the Guild had a mission, and it's still in the bylaws. The purpose of the Guild is to help the mountain people. Now the college-trained people are moving in because we have a real good market here. They can move in and join the Guild and be a part of the market. It has removed some of the market from the rural craftsmen. The Florida people that came up for the fair are no longer coming. We had cloggers and traditional entertainment. Now, they've got classical guitar--which doesn't really say that this is the Appalachian mountain region to a person from Florida.

N&T: What do you think is craft?

BARKER: Crafts are hand-made from natural materials. Crafts are utilitarian. The worst thing that ever happened to us is this whole country look. It's made some markets, but you mention craft to a lot of the public now, and they think of little cut-out duckies, horsies and cows hanging on the wall. It's very artificial.

I think all of your native, traditional, Appalachian crafts were here because there was a need for them. You made churns, you made brooms, you made quilts, you made coverlets because you needed them.

For example, our basic broom line at Berea is very functional. We comb the seeds out, so you have a broom you can sweep with. We have one new style where we don't take the seeds out. That one's purely decorative.

GRAY: And they made cornshuck dolls or the carved dolls were made because they couldn't afford to buy Christmas presents or birthday presents.

BARKER: And that need no longer exists. It hasn't since the 20s, and that's the reason the Guild was started, really. To preserve them and to create a market.

N&T: Why do you want to preserve something for which there is no longer a need?

GRAY: Historic value. That's your roots.

N&T: How are the decorative brooms any less artificial than the cut-out duckies?

BARKER: That broom comes out of a very real craft, a tradition. I will admit from a marketing standpoint, there's probably not much difference in the market appeal of it, except that it's a much more honest, natural thing that evolved from the brooms we were already doing. The skill and the materials are exactly the same.

Have you read David Whisnant's book? (*All That is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region*, published by The University of North Carolina Press in 1983.) A lot of what he says is very accurate. Berea College trained 80 to 90 percent of the weavers in this region during the 20s, 30s and 40s, and our weaving instructor

Somewhere in Georgia, 1931

Unending dark mottled clouds lie low
over rolling hills peppered with Black Angus
and huge fields salted with ungathered cotton.
At dark thirty, still light enough to see
black shadows of trees and Angus
the raccoons awaken, go out in search of food,
find only bluetick hounds and night hunters.

Smoke curls lazily from the rock chimney of a
plank house
with cracks in the wall large enough
to throw a tomcat through;
inside, the children go to bed, expecting pleasant
dreams,
finding only previews of tomorrow's labors.

—Anita Poole

Anita Poole was born in Toccoa, Ga., in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains She teaches seventh grade language arts and lives in Louisville, Ga Her poems have been published in ***Ambrosia***, ***Straight Ahead***, ***Manna*** *and* ***Up Against the Wall, Mother***

Southern Highland Handicraft Guild continued

was Swedish. The truth of the matter is there is not a bit of difference between Swedish weaving pattern and English or anybody else's. It's just the colors and some of the uses that they put it to. Where I disagree with David is saying that those who began the settlement schools did bad things. If it hadn't been for the missionaries, it'd all be gone. A combination of the missionaries and the marketplace is what preserved the craft culture.

I'm supposed to be a panelist on some kind of international program on the role of the marketplace in cultural preservation, and they're using Appalachia as a model where the marketplace has preserved the culture that would have been gone a long, long time ago. It's true. There would have been no reason to weave your own cloth. You can buy durable, cheap cloth that's woven in the mill.

N&T: Why are crafts in demand?

GRAY: There's a personal feeling about it. When you go into a store that has all machine-made products, you don't feel like going out and touching them. When you go through a craft fair, you want to pick up a piece of pottery or a turned bowl or a broom. It has a personal feeling, a warmth to it that the machine-made product doesn't have.

BARKER: And a character or a personality. When I get up in the morning and drink a cup of coffee, I know who made that mug. I know there's a person connected to that. If I just want a mug to drink coffee from, I can get one at K-Mart.

N&T: But what has happened to the rural craftspeople?

GRAY: They're still going to smaller crossroads fairs. And some of them are being sought out by some of the more astute crafts shop managers.

BARKER: Or just individual collectors will buy their work. Every now and then, I stop and wonder if we didn't do too good a job the last 25 years because we really pushed the marketing. I guess what Bob has done for all of his career, and what I've done here and in Kentucky is to work for these people and sell the work. So we've been out there pushing it and promoting, and we beat down the doors to museums, we beat down the newspapers' doors. And sometimes I think we succeeded so well that in some ways, we've helped kill part of the culture. We preserved part of the thing, and we may have killed off part of the rest of it by making it so successful.

N&T: Can you plan for that?

BARKER: No, I'm not sure you can. And I wouldn't do anything different. I think now, though, that the folk arts, if it really is a folk art, is a little different. A lot of the contemporary Appalachian folk art is pretty hideous stuff. It's rolled up beer cans—

N&T: Sprayed pine cones, liter bottles twirling in the wind.

BARKER: But in one sense of the definition of folk art, that *is* what it is. And some of it lasts because it's really good. You find upstairs (at the fair) the willow and oak split baskets, the corn-shuck dolls. Those have lasted because they're absolutely beautiful.

GRAY: A lot of people who create them really put their soul into it.

BARKER: And you know, as far as just preserving everything, I think there's a lot of stuff, you might want to put one in the museum, and the rest of it is ugly. But somebody wired Clorox bottles in every tree in their front yard, and it kind of grew on me. It's like a folk sculpture.

N&T: What do you think the state of fine art is around Appalachia?

BARKER: Almost nonexistent.

N&T: Do you think some of this is fine art—downstairs?

BARKER: Well, O.K. If there is a fine art in Appalachia, its strength comes from what has traditionally been called the craft world. You get an awful lot of glass, ceramics, fabric down there, that would overwhelm any painting show or sculpture show you could pull from this whole region.

The real strength of art in this region is in quilts, baskets and now blown glass, pottery, jewelry. That's excellent. You know, in this region we equal or set the national standard in a lot of those areas.

A Dialogue in Folk and Fine Art

by Jane Harris Woodside

Talk to a fine artist and talk to a folklorist, and you get very different perspectives on art in Appalachia. Chicago native Sandy Blain, a craftswoman who specializes in ceramics, is the director of the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts. Attracting both professional and amateur craftspeople to its workshops, Arrowmont is the nationally known visual arts complex accredited by the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, which developed out of the Pi Beta Phi Settlement School. Robert "Roby" Cogswell, a native of Shelbyville, Tenn., earned his doctorate in folklore from Indiana University. Currently he is the Folk Arts Director for the Tennessee Arts Commission where he coordinates state folk arts activities.

N&T: What is your understanding of traditional or folk art?

BLAIN: When I think of traditional, it can be one of two things: either utilizing traditional materials, such as the natural materials used for making the corn shuck dolls and figures, or it can be the outcome of the product, the form. For example, the egg basket shape of the Appalachian basket would be a traditional form; it's not an innovative form. It's not something that you, as an individual artist, have designed. It's something that you have researched, and the end product relates to something from the past.

Another example would be Appalachian brooms. Well, those brooms do not have a personal expressive individual quality. That's the same broom style that has been made for years and years, and these people in a sense are machines remaking the same thing.

Traditional craftspeople are those people that are probably self-taught, who are still doing what grandmother, mother has been doing. Or they are those people who have taken it on as an avocation and realize that when tourists come to this particular area, they want something related to "Appalachian" crafts. The craftspeople are making these for under $25, or even $50, products that the average public can afford.

COGSWELL: I realize how flexibly people regard those terms, and I've become more slippery myself in dealing with them. I have, when I was pushed for a definition, defined folk arts as those creative and expressive processes that are handed down by oral tradition and by customary example within groups of people. I try to stress process.

I tend to prefer a generational folk artist who has never been aware of artistic alternatives to what he's inherited or cultivated on his own. On the other hand, I think too much stress on folk arts' inherited nature has, in some ways, given folk arts a bad name—being really moldy fig stuff that is rote repetition of artistic activity. And I think that while that is a very important criteria, it also allows people to try to set up folk arts in complete opposition to fine arts in which there is some originality and individual inspiration.

I think if you look closely enough at almost any traditional artist, you will recognize a good deal of individuality. A good example is a place like Cannon County where literally dozens of incredible basketmakers are still active. An untrained eye might go in and say, "All of these baskets are the same." But if you look at the same group of baskets in Cannon County with an insider's eye, you will realize that a Mary Prater basket is quite different from an Ida Pearl Davis basket which is different from a Betty Tanner basket. There are so many variations in the ways the ribs might be made, the way the weavers might be used and so forth. All these basketmakers in Cannon County recognize one another's baskets for very fine points of originality and innovation and individuality. It is indeed a cultural thing.

N&T: What is your understanding of fine art?

BLAIN: The goal of fine craft is to make a piece that is hopefully aesthetically pleasing to you and says something to you as an individual because it's an expression of you. But then, the next goal would be to relate to the public in terms of its being a piece that would be aesthetically pleasing to them.

I am a contemporary artist. I'm university trained. My influences are worldly and personal. The community I identify with is a universal worldly group.

Roby Cogswell

Sandy Blain

N&T: Are people who buy your work buying a piece of you?
BLAIN: They're buying more a piece of you when they are buying a one-of-a-kind piece. I think when you start to get into buying work from somebody who's going to make a thousand mugs, they're almost like a human machine. There's no room for additional personal expression. That cut has got to be decorated the exact same way as the last one because I've got to get 50 of them done by 5 o'clock. It's almost like a paint by number.
N&T: What about the distinction between art and craft?
BLAIN: I think that people have thought of craft as minor art. I call them all visual arts, and I don't think it makes any difference whether you're doing a two- or a three-dimensional piece, a functional or non-functional. It all goes back to idea or concept, to one's technical abilities, to using the material to its fullest. I just juried a show called "Hard and Soft," a national show dealing with mixed media. I chose 84 pieces out of 29 trays of slides. What I looked for was concept and the piece's technical qualities. Did this piece meet the criteria of what it was designed for? There were very few outright functional pieces selected. So for that kind of a show, and I think you could say this for most major juried shows, you're choosing more one-of-a-kind pieces.
N&T: What relationship do you see between Appalachian folk and fine art?
COGSWELL: It's complicated. Folk arts have been a kind of baseline cultural expression growing out of the history of the Appalachian experience. The fine arts have generally been introduced into the area as a subsequent impulse by outside interests.
BLAIN: I think that we sometimes fail to realize that we have a rather homogenized society today. People that are working in this Appalachian region are either self-taught or they're university-trained. And I think that a university-trained person for the most part is not going to regress to doing the typical folk art, the truly traditional Appalachian crafts. Because why would they have gotten an M.F.A. painting or ceramic degree and then do something where there's no personal expression allowed?

I think it's good for both to go on. I think it's a very healthy thing. I think an educational climate such as we have at Arrowmont where we have traditional basketry taught one week, the very next week we would have a class using traditional materials, but the end product is going to be very contemporary sculptural or vessel forms. A lot of people will start with one and move to the other or have both going on at the same time.

I think that some people want to perpetuate some of those traditional forms and techniques. They want to see a product that they can recognize.
N&T: When are traditional crafts "art"?
BLAIN: I have a *lot* of baskets. A lot. I have always collected baskets. At home I have a collection of Cherokee baskets which I consider art pieces. They're really elegant forms. But even when I buy a piece of traditional art, I'm looking first of all at the form. Then I'm looking at the color and texture and pattern, and you know, even if something is going to be more expensive, if I really think that form is better than this one, I will purchase that. I'm really looking at it based on quality. And that's how I feel that you should be looking at any work of art—whether it's traditional or contemporary.
N&T: How can a lay person know a "quality" piece when they see one?
BLAIN: Until you have experienced working with clay and found out what happens when you work it this way or that way, you really don't understand what is possible with this material versus that one. Until you've had at least some experience—an appreciation course or some opportunity where you can get your hands on the material, it's difficult to determine quality. And the more experience that you have in going to galleries, talking with people, the better it's going to be.
N&T: What's the folklorist's perspective on all this?
COGSWELL: I have seen many contemporary basketmakers' works that are indeed a wonder in freedom of form, but when you look at the talents of the person who put them together, I don't think they compare with the traditional basketmaker who actually splits out the white oak and so forth. The skill in folk art is much more tied to process. I mean you know, sit somebody down and tell them to make a split by hand, and you will pretty quickly cull out who a real basketmaker is. A traditional basketmaker may not have the background in freedom of expression, but a contemporary basketmaker usually has no background whatsoever in a tradition of form and technique, a tradition that demands that they make the splits out by hand and make a form that's not only very well-defined, but also that they make that form so damn well, that they can do every one exactly alike. The repetition of the design is part of the artistic challenge.

Folk arts are extremely flexible and evasive and variable, and I think many times the high cultural institutions have a rough time accepting them on their own terms. They want to teach them and standardize them and look at them comparatively and apply yardsticks so that they can somehow assert that this is good folk art and this is bad folk art. It's very difficult to resist because that's the way a lot of institutional culture is defined.

I get phone calls all the time, you know, people wanting me to say "This guy is the best carver in the state." When I simply don't see the point. Folk arts are just to be accepted on their own terms.
N&T: How do you help people appreciate folk art on its own terms?
COGSWELL: I think it's a constant job of education, and I think that's one very important obligation of folklorists doing public folklore work. I recall sitting at a performance with a woman from a high arts background, and it was an old time music band playing and, you know, the fiddle player had the fiddle crooked down in his arm. And the lady turned around to me and said, "Oh, I just love these old fiddle players. They break all the rules." And I said, "No, Ma'am, they just have different rules."
N&T: What markets are there for folk and fine art?
BLAIN: Craftsmen at Arrowmont are varied. Many of them are involved with fairs and festivals, many of them are involved with galleries or exhibitions of various types, juried and invitational. I might add that a lot of people were and still are negative when it comes to craft fairs and festivals because they feel that

they're too blatantly commercial. My feeling about it is that festivals are the best thing that's happened in the last 20 years to the art scene. Simply because you're getting art to the public. You're having fairs and festivals in small communities and rural areas. You just give them that little bit of exposure, and every year hopefully the quality goes up a little bit more. So that automatically those people are being educated little by little. They don't even realize it's happening to them because if they did realize it, they probably wouldn't go.

COGSWELL: I think that sometimes people tend to regard the folk arts as something that is a hook for involving lower class groups into the arts experience. That is, we'll get them into arts activities by coming to a bluegrass festival and then we'll wean them off those kinds of things and get them into opera and ballet. I think that's unfortunate. I think that one of the challenges to integrating folk arts with the rest of the arts world is to stress that we need to educate the fine arts patrons and institutions that folk arts should be accepted on their own terms and that they should work to maintain the integrity of the arts form.

People may buy folk art because of all the warm fuzzies that surround folk arts. In fact what they're accepting is not really what they think it is. In many cases, the audience might not be able to tell the difference between a real folk artist and an actor dressed up in a granny dress making lye soap. That's certainly what's going on in a lot of commercial venues which pretend to be presenting folk cultural material. If fact, it is theater. The Tennessee Department of Tourism right now has a promotion which has Dolly Parton acting as if she's making what is clearly an Oriental basket.

I think people have a very shallow notion of getting back to earlier times, a secure and romantic past. People really think that it's quite an easy task to propel yourself into the past in one way or another. Even if you're inventing a past that never was. And I think that this is a whole emphasis that is very wise to draw. Folk arts are around us, and they are continuing to be carried on by living people. And they are changing with the times.

N&T: What is the state of fine arts in the region?

BLAIN: I think we're gaining ground, but I certainly don't feel that we're at a place where we should be content with that. I think that we need to keep pushing for more money coming into the area. I think we need to be pushing for more support of schools like this where people can come. I'm not saying we're hurting for enrollment because we're not. But I'm just saying to make people more aware of these kinds of places, to have more visiting lecturers, demonstrators on college campuses. To get back into some of the rural communities where very little is being done. Because we all know that a lot of those people will not travel. They're threatened to go out of their area because it's safe and secure. So it's pretty hard to educate them.

N&T: What is the state of folk arts in the region?

COGSWELL: Fine arts, museums, opera and ballet companies require larger organizations and a good deal of money, season subscriptions, public relations and all these other things that go into the formation of an institution around an art form. Folk arts happen. People will pick up things from other people in their immediate folk cultural context and continue to do them. There's a line that I can't take credit for, but I love to repeat: "Thinking that you have to develop an organization to represent folk arts is kind of like trying to teach rabbits to eat lettuce."

Hitchhiker

Back in the 50's my daddy had one of those
air-conditioners put in our '58 Buick and
was right proud of it.
Then one day, long after the Law said it was
never safe to do so, no matter how clean and
decent they looked, my daddy picked up an old
hitchhiker between Cowpens and Gaffney.
Daddy figured the man would be impressed
with cold air in July.
He let the man out where he wanted to be let
out and he thanked Daddy for the ride then
added:

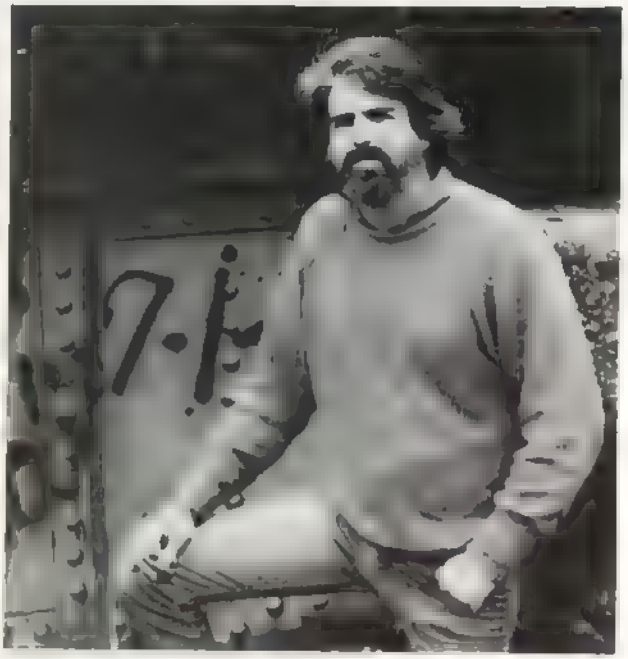
"Son, if you don't get this car fixed fore
winter, you gonna freeze to death."

—Marilyn Orchoff

Roadside Theater

Whitesburg, Kentucky

Dudley Cocke, Director



Roadside's plays have grown out of Appalachian traditions, using the mountains' true stories and legends, musical styles and storytelling techniques. The theater, which began developing plays in the mid-1970s, is part of Appalshop, the media production center in Whitesburg, Ky. Appalshop grew out of War on Poverty programs and produced films, records (June Appal label), television shows (Headwaters) and plays (Roadside) .

Roadside's director, Dudley Cocke, grew up in Eastern Virginia, attended Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Va., and went on to graduate school at Harvard in American Studies. He came to Whitesburg to work on a play, and he stayed to oversee Roadside, which has gathered performing credits in the United States and abroad.

Cocke spoke with ***Now and Then*** *editor Pat Arnow at the annual meeting of ROOTS (Regional Organization of Theaters South) in Black Mountain, N.C., this fall.*

by
Pat Arnow

People who had heard about what Appalshop was doing in film and video said, "let's do it in theater." The spark, the thing that caught on at Appalshop, was that people in the area could tell their own story. They didn't have to rely on other people coming and saying what the region was like. That was a pretty exciting idea in 1969.

When we started, what we wanted to figure out was how to make a theater that made sense in Eastern Kentucky and Central Appalachia. We wanted to reach people who were kin and family. We began with the old stories that were still being passed down.

We were working a lot in the local schools, telling these stories and playing music in Central Appalachia: West Virginia, East Tennessee, Kentucky, Southwest Virginia. Coming up in the 50s and into the 60s in those local schools, you were taught to throw away those old stories and that language. Everybody had grown up in that. People in Roadside had grown up in that. And here they were embracing it. They wanted to carry that message back to the school kids and say, "Pay attention to this stuff. It ain't so bad."

I grew up in the country with a family of storytellers. Where I grew up was a tourist town during three months of the summer (in Eastern Virginia on the coast, what is now Virginia Beach), but then it was a very small town in the winter. I spent a lot of time with my grandfather hunting and fishing and visiting with his friends and hanging out at stores hearing stories. I left the area in 1964 because the culture that I had grown up in was being paved over. I moved into the Shenendoah Valley.

I came to Roadside in 1976 with Don Baker to write a play called *Red Fox Second Hanging* (based on a real event in Eastern Kentucky). It was the first attempt to go beyond just using a story that had been learned—but we still relied on oral history about an event that was important to the area and still on a lot of people's minds, as we found out.

There really wasn't a theater at that time. When you are in your 20s and you're excited about something, you can live on very little. People were living off the idea. Everybody was living in one house. There was this energy and this work that was being done.

We did this research and made this play over an eight or nine month period. Don wanted to be in the play, which left me to try to learn about how to direct the play. That's how I got started on that. My background before then had been in

Ron Short, Tommy Bledsoe and Nancy Jeffrey performing in Roadside Theater's *South of The Mountain*.

writing.

Then I began setting up the structure of the theater. I work in the artistic end as the director and writer and dramaturge, and I work in the producing end, and I work in the fundraising.

All the people who were performing in Roadside were born and came up in the culture. (I was the only person who hadn't been born into that culture.) That's a big qualification to work with the theater. We can teach stage movement, but the sense of language and the sense of the context and importance of the material are really hard to teach. Since then we have continued to make plays that are original, but their foundation has not changed.

South of the Mountain, *Pretty Polly* and *Leaving Egypt* have been combined into the "Pine Mountain Trilogy," which we just finished performing in London. We call it a trilogy because it looks at three distinct periods of time through the eyes of a family from right around where we are. We are touring those three plays. Ron Short (Roadside songwriter, playwright and performer) worked as a writer on all of them, and I worked as director on all of them.

Pretty Polly begins before Civil War times and goes up to about 1900. It's about Polly Branum Johnson who lived in Wise County, Va., and was the WPA's favorite storyteller. When they had the Writer's Project collecting there (as part of President Franklin Roosevelt's Depression-era recovery programs in the 1930s), they just kept going back because she had these wonderful stories. She was up in her 80s.

When we did that show the first time in Whitesburg, all of her kin came, and we got a picture of them in the office—it was a big picture.

When we are developing any of our plays, we always perform them first right where we are in Whitesburg for local audiences. We try to get people who helped us or who we figure know what we are talking about. We do that at an early stage of development. It helps us fashion the play. We tour nationally, and it's very important for us that the people at home feel like we are fairly representing their lives and their culture.

South of the Mountain by Ron Short is really his family story. He wrote 13 or 14 original songs for it. Of course it becomes something more through all of the things a play goes through. There come truths bigger than the family experience.

There are people in our audiences who went through the same things. We were in a little church in Lee County, Va., and a fellow in the first row, suspenders, stood up after the play, turned around to the audience, said, "I'm not throwing off on those fellers on the stage and that young lady. They did a good job. But if you want to find out about that time, talk to me. I lived through it." That's fairly typical of that play when we perform in the area.

Leaving Egypt (the story of a Vietnam veteran) is the third in the trilogy. What we're finding with this play is that kids really respond to it. It's a history of their parents that they want to understand. A lot of the teenagers are tuning into that play in a way they don't tune into the other plays.

I just had a debate with my oldest daughter about whether what she saw in our work seemed true to her high school experience in the public school in Norton. And it didn't. She said, 'Some of it seems a little stereotypical to me.'

What we're doing about it is working with younger people. We started drama programs in Letcher County, and they're making their own plays. Their first play was about what you do when you graduate from Whitesburg High School. Do you go off to college and leave everything you knew and your family, or do you go work in the mines?

Last year we were in New England, the Southeast, the Midwest, the Southwest and from Tacoma, Wash., to Santa Barbara. We spent a month touring small, rural towns in North Dakota.

We made a community festival at each site so local artists would perform with us. At Cavalier, N.D., there were two old-time string bands. In another town there was a high school Indian dance group. It was terrific because you could see in the audience the pride they were taking in the realization, if they hadn't had it before, of just how rich their own community was. When we are out touring we try to carry that same notion that it's the art right in your own backyard that you do not want to overlook. That's where we build our work from.

We were just at the London International Festival of Theater for three weeks. London has a very definite sense of what theater is, and they also have a stereotypical sense through the mass media of what

Kim Cole and Tommy Bledsoe in *Leaving Egypt*.

Appalachia is. These two forces are something you have to do battle with.

Mainstream media does like to make its little cubbyholes. You constantly have to fight that and be aware they're going to do that. There's really not a lot of room to write about complications in the mainstream press or to show complexity in a three or four minute spot on the evening news on the cultural segment.

We put out a lot of our own advertising so that we're controlling the image and the text. And we try to do background interviews when we go to a place that isn't used to us. In North Dakota we showed work on Prairie Television about Appalachia from Appalshop. Then we asked libraries throughout the state to consider putting up an Appalachian collection so people could read about it. We sent bibliographies. One of our press releases is a general press release that talks not so much about us as about the area. We just try to clue people in and have them thinking about this place before we get there so we create some context for the work. This can really be a struggle.

There's also a class dimension to what we're doing. And nobody seems to want to talk about class much these days. But it exists, and it certainly exists in Thatcher's Britain. In London it was very hard to connect with the working class, people that our stuff comes from. They didn't feel welcome to this kind of festival. When we did hook up with that audience, there was a very strong connection to the material. The most frequent comment to our work was, 'you can't imagine how much this reminds me of my family.'

I go to some of these fancy theaters in cities, and it's pretty clear what they're putting on is serving the interests and the sensibilities of their audience. Often it's dressed up businesspeople, and they're speaking to them.

We're trying to balance that, we're trying to lay down some new road, that's what we were doing in North Dakota. We were trying to reach up to rural communities and other working class folk. That's what we tried to do in London. We went to Wales and toured Welsh mining valleys, and the connection was so tight. An Englishman could have come down from London and been thought much more a stranger than we were

We're trying to stay faithful to where we come from. The way we're interested in moving ahead is with our community. It's an ensemble. We have a commitment over the long haul to spending our lives in this particular place. We're trying to understand the history around us. That doesn't mean we're just celebrating where we're from, though that's important for people who've never seen much of their lives on the stage. But we're also interested in not avoiding controversy and really looking at the future. The interesting thing for us right now is looking at the next generation coming in and taking our place. We're working with a lot of young people. We're open to see where they want to go with it.

If Appalshop's accomplished anything in the last 20 years, it's been to provide a point of view in that conversation that says there's a lot to be proud of and a lot to pay attention to. There are also a lot of problems, and we need to look at that.

We try to provide something that can be useful to people's lives, not only as entertainment or as the occasion of a decorative function of dressing up, but that can be useful in trying to figure out things. That's why we're so interested in making the plays with the community. And the play itself is that kind of conversation. That's why we work with storytelling. When we finish we don't draw the curtain and say, 'goodnight folks.' We hang out and talk and try to figure out what it meant to them. One of the things I like about the theater and the different performers is when the play ends, they are no different talking to the audience than they were in the play. It's not like a mask that's now being peeled back.

Watercolor Barns

The fifth barn of
the show
reminds me that
they—barns—as
art are over
and overdone.
Barns of personal
acquaintance reeked—
cold, drafty, musty,
dusty, or damp.

Haylofts alone
reasonably comfortable—
sweet, herbal refuge for
hens that left
breakfast surprises,
mice scary-quick,
scurrying, bouncing out
of sight,
children/lovers escaping
heat/cold for
hay slides and baled
forts/hideaways under
rain-tapped tin
right for afternoon
napping/loving.

The sixth barn of
the show
reminds me that
they—barns—as
art are over
and overdone
memories.

—A. Jane Hicks

A. Jane Hicks is a consultant for the gifted and talented programs in Kingsport, Tenn. Her poetry has been published in ***Mockingbird*** *and* ***Now and Then.***

The Road Company

Johnson City, Tennessee

Bob Leonard, Director

*Bob Leonard came to Johnson City, Tenn., in 1974, aiming to create community-based theater. With a small troupe, he developed the Road Company, a professional touring theater group that invented original drama out of community concerns. They created 16 plays over the next 15 years and toured throughout the Southeast with their shows. While focusing on community concerns, they had no intention of making the community feel too comfortable. The theater's sometimes avant-garde style baffled some audience members, endeared them to others. They experimented with style and form. They tried a musical (**Little Chicago,** based on the legend that Al Capone had a headquarters in Johnson City), and a futuristic, almost absurdist drama about a woman's life in the workforce (**Blind Desire**). Most recently, the company has developed **Echoes & Postcards**, which explores the histories of the company members in music, dance and stories.*

Leonard, a native of Western Massachusetts, attended Wesleyan University and did masters work in theater at Catholic University. He is now, in addition to his role as artistic director of the Road Company, a master teacher of directing at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va.

by
Pat Arnow

The impulse to work in the Southern mountains came from an interest in working within a specific rooted community. I had lived for a long time in Washington, D.C., which was a very transient community.

In a kind of romantic way, I imagined an affinity created by mountain living that extended all along the Appalachian range from Georgia to Maine. Having been raised in Western Massachusetts in the mountains and in an agricultural economic base, it was a community of people whom I felt an affinity to. But it's an affinity which isn't recognized, because as communities we tend to be very isolated. We don't operate in any cross-community way, which is what I had in my mind when I started talking about a touring company that would be working in the Southern mountains, that the company itself would be a tool, a voice, to move from one community to another, to share perceptions.

All the work the Road Company has done has come out of our collective understanding of the community in which we work. Frankly I think that's true of work that artists produce in general. Some are more conscious of it than others. Some take advantage and treat it as an asset, and others tend to just let that happen.

The first show we did was called *The Momentary Art of Statemaking*, which is about the short time that East Tennessee was a separate state (State of Franklin). It opened at Jonesborough Days in 1975. It played in the parks in Johnson City and a few indoor sites that summer. We no sooner finished getting the show up than we were out of money. One of the things that sustained us through the no-money time was the memory of people standing in the rain in Jonesborough as we performed. They wouldn't let us quit. We just played on through the rain, and everybody stood there. That was a sustenance, way beyond the ticket price.

We were funded to do *Horsepower* by the Tennessee Humanities Council. We agreed to open up a series of four roundtable discussions at the Power Board in Johnson City to address issues of energy consumption in the Tennessee Valley. It was right in the middle of the energy crunch, 1977-78.

Around 200 people showed up. We did not present ourselves as experts in the field. We simply were organizers for this discussion. Jo Carson, who was the principal organizer, also listens real well. And she developed a short story out of listening to these conversations, which we then took into rehearsal and developed into a play.

Those same 200-300 people who came to the discussion came to see the play, and that was what the Tennessee Committee for the Humanities was interested in. The play was, in a sense, a further investigation of the discussion.

It was one of our most successful projects. We got a group of people who were pulled together because of their interest in the subject matter, not theater. They learned about theater as being pertinent to community issues, and I would venture to bet that a large percentage of those 200 people are still fans of the Road Company.

We got to a point in the development of the ensemble where the ensemble wanted to work out of its own voice. We had applied developmental techniques to issues that were part of the public forum—things that you might hear about on the nightly news. But there are other community issues which are not necessarily newsworthy, at least as determined by people in the news business. The actors in the company had become welded together more as an ensemble, and we wanted to find out what sorts of things we had common interests in, and were those things reflections of a part of our community. So we elected to get together for six weeks in open workshop with no specific subject matter as an agenda. And we discovered ourselves, partially because of our own state of affairs, being quite concerned about unemployment, and how does a person, particularly a single woman, negotiate her life in the workplace? The format it took was in future fantasy. That was the form which seemed consistent with our approach.

Horsepower, an Electric Fable **by Jo Carson and the actors of the Road Company. Pictured from left to right are Lucinda Flodin, Kelly R. Hill, Emily Green and Dennis Frederick.**

Emily Green, Eugene Wolf, Jo Carson, Christine Murdock and Ed Snodderly in *Echoes and Postcards* by the Road Company.

There were people who have stood up and cheered at the end of "Blind Desire," and there are people who did not like it, people who have left during it.

People who didn't like "Blind Desire" rarely talked about what the play was about. They talked about having trouble understanding it. And yet, probably a wonderful statement came out of *Blind Desire*: someone came back a few days after the performance and said, "you know, when I watched that play I really didn't like it because I didn't understand it." And then she said, "three days later, I realized it was about me. And I'm really glad you brought it."

In *Echoes and Postcards* we tapped an issue of more universal interest—issues of music and family. And we found a form that was more universally appreciated.

The ensemble is now looking for a public forum to develop some further understanding of a public voice and to develop a play out of that voice, which is the *Horsepower* model.

I think of theater as being most valuable if people we think of as "folk" like it. And I think it is the challenge in front of theater artists to find ways to discover the aesthetic in the general public rather than thinking of ourselves as keepers of some sort of fine art and having to educate the public to some kind of highbrow special aesthetic.

Every time I go to work, I am trying to develop something that a lot of people relate to. The intention is not to do something innovative or avant-garde, but to give expression to something in a way that people can understand, and we are more or less successful at that.

That's the only way we can find out about public aesthetic. What I see that we're talking about is who has the aesthetic. Is it the artist or the public? For a long time it's been something of the artists' domain. And I just come from a whole different place. I haven't solved the problems. I don't pretend we've got it licked, but I see our intention to recognize that it is the public that has the aesthetic, and the artist has to learn it.

ART LESSONS

by Judy Odom

Brady Pierson started drawing as soon as he got old enough to hold a pencil. The first stick people that he made had life and movement and a kind of simple grace. His mother recognized their promise, and she kept them for the future in a big blue scrapbook. She bought him tempera paints and brushes and thick newsprint pads to practice on.

"This boy has got a talent to be proud of," she announced to Brady's daddy and his aunts and uncles and the postman and the clerks at J. C. Penney's and whoever else might care to listen. "Someday he'll have pictures in museums. Yes, he will. And they'll be worth some money, let me tell you. Everybody in the town of Radford's gon' have cause to marvel at his work and call his name out loud."

His mother's visions of that distant glory didn't mean a lot to Brady. He didn't pay that much attention when she talked about big money and his coming fame. Radford was too small a town to have museums, so he doubted that he'd ever see his pictures hanging in one. As far as Brady was concerned, it didn't matter either way.

His pleasure in the shapes he saw around him—and the colors—kept him drawing. They had a natural balance and a rightness that he wanted for his own. He couldn't talk about it to his mother or to anybody else It went light-years beyond his powers of explaining. He didn't have the words to say what he was trying for each time he took a crayon or a paintbrush in his hand.

So Brady found out very early that an artist might as well expect to have his work put down and sometimes bad-mouthed and low-rated. He learned that crucial lesson from his teacher, Mrs. Thomas, in the second grade. She didn't share his mother's high opinion of his art work. Mrs. Thomas hated nearly every picture he drew.

"Whoever heard of purple trees and grass?" she howled one day. "Look out that window. That's how trees and grass are s'posed to look—a nice soft pretty green." She pointed one long bony finger at his picture. "Brady, when are you gon' learn to use your eyes? That sky out there is blue. It's not that funny shade of lavender you made it." She held his drawing high. The whole class started laughing hard. "Just 'cause you got a brand new box with 64 crayolas in it, that dudd'n mean you have to use 'em every one," she screamed above the noise.

He bit his lip to stop its trembling, and he clutched his crayon tighter in his fingers. "Things do look like that at sundown," Brady said. "There for a minute, everything's all purple—just before the sunlight's finally gone."

He said it low, so Mrs. Thomas didn't hear him. Brady knew she wouldn't have believed him anyhow. She offered him a clean white sheet of paper, but he shook his head and scowled and folded up his arms. He wouldn't start his picture over if she stuck a million gold stars on it when he finished. Mrs. Thomas gave the class a little talk on stubbornness and folly, and she marked a zero in her gradebook next to Brady's name.

He realized that day he couldn't change his way of seeing just to satisfy one blind old woman. She could mark his pictures zero till the sun went down forever, and the world plunged into everlasting dark. He wouldn't alter one true line or color—not for Mrs. Thomas or for anybody. Brady felt as cold and lonesome as a single redbird in the snow.

What really set him shivering was the secret knowledge that his mother didn't care for purple trees like he was drawing either. Unlike Mrs. Thomas, she was too polite to say so, but his mother wanted trees and grass a normal green. Because she loved him, though, she went on praising him and saving all his pictures. She told herself this wild unsettling use of color was a childish phase that he would soon outgrow.

The months passed --and the years—but Brady didn't change. He kept on making purple trees and sometimes people blue as winter shadows. By seventh grade, his mother realized he needed help from a professional. The summer he was 12,

she bought him private lessons. To please her, Brady started going twice a week to Maxwell Larkin's studio.

Maxwell's realistic paintings of old barns and spinning wheels and dulcimers and Alabama cotton fields had earned him money and a reputation all the way from Radford clear to Memphis. He sold everything he painted through some fancy gallery up in Birmingham. 'Most every high-class family in Radford had a Larkin picture. Carter Mays, the owner of the cotton mill, had three.

So Mrs. Pierson hoped that studying with Maxwell Larkin would transform her only son into a popular and profit-making artist. All he needed was a little discipline.

For nearly two months, Mr. Larkin did the best he could with Brady. He had never seen a student with more aptitude—or more resistance to the things he didn't want to learn. He worked enthusiastically on shading and perspective and the rules of composition. But Brady's colors stayed his own—whatever Mr. Larkin said.

Finally, more in sorrow than in anger, Mr. Larkin gave up on him. "Mrs. Pierson, I can't take your money any more," he sighed. "I've taught that boy as much as he's gon' let me teach him. He's not interested in honest painting like I do."

Brady's mother cried. She couldn't help it. Nobody ever finds it easy, relinquishing a cherished dream. For several days, she couldn't bear to look at Brady's pictures, much less paste them in her scrapbook.

"Son, I reckon you gon' end up clerking in your daddy's store," she said. "I thought that you were surely bound for greater things. Now your daddy might agree to let you paint the prices on his windows—you know, when he has his Friday sales on produce. I don't mean pictures of the fruits and vegetables. Lord, no. The way you paint, folks wouldn't recognize 'em. You'll have to stick with just the numbers and letters. Black and white." She pressed her favorite hanky to her overflowing eyes.

Brady cried some, too, that night up in his bedroom with the lights off and nobody there to watch him. It's not pleasant knowing you're a mystery and a stubborn failure to the ones who ought to see you clear.

Wide awake and staring, Brady lay there in his single bed without a color or a glint of moon to give him comfort. Then he thought about his best friend Jeremiah Foster, and he smiled into the dark. Ol' Jer could be depended on to understand his pictures, even if he didn't always like them. Jeremiah took to weirdness like a gold kite rising on a green March wind.

Brady yawned and pulled the blanket close around him. He turned over on his left side so he'd wake up in the morning looking out the window at the maple tree.

Some time or other, he decided with a sleepy grin, he'd have to do a picture of ol' Jeremiah. Mostly, he would use the soft clear yellows and the different shades of orange that the sky takes on at dawn. For balance, he would add the true red of the first leaves opening on a maple in the springtime. He wondered whether Jer would recognize who it was meant to be.

Next morning it was Saturday, so Brady headed straight for Jer's house after breakfast. Jer was outside in the driveway fooling with a basketball. His big ambition was to learn to spin it on his finger. He practiced every day.

Brady watched as Jeremiah set the basketball in place and slapped it gently with his free hand. For a breath or two, it whirled in balance on his finger pretty as the round world on its axis pole. But then the ball slowed down and started wobbling. In another second, it was falling through the air. It hit the concrete, bounced three times, and rolled toward Brady. He stopped it with his foot. "Hey, Jer. You wanna shoot some hoop or something, man?"

Jeremiah pushed his glasses higher on his nose. "Yo, Brady. Hell—you know I don't like playing basketball. I'm not a damn giraffe with arms like you," he grinned. "The scientific principles of finger-spinning, now—" He caught the ball when Brady tossed it to him. "That's what's interesting to me." Jer tipped the basketball up on his finger. It hesitated for an instant and toppled down again. He kicked it into the garage. "I gotta learn to spin that thing. Why won't it spin?" he grumbled. "I plotted all the vectors and the weight and wind velocity and everything."

"You'll get it, Jer," said Brady. "Take it easy. You can feel it in your fingers when it's spinning right. You nearly had it for a minute there." He punched Jer on the arm. "What say we run away from home tonight?" he asked the question lightly. "I think I am. You wanna come?"

He laughed, but Jeremiah didn't.

"Your mama on your case again?"

"Uh huh." Brady jammed his hands into his pockets. "Mr. Larkin—he won't give me lessons any more. Ol' devil says I'm hopeless. Ma's real mad."

Jeremiah's pale blue eyes had taken on that milky glaze they always got when he was thinking. "There's other painters in the world," he said. Slowly, one by one, he popped his knuckles. "All those crazy colors. Yeah. Come on."

Brady didn't ask where they were going; he just took off after Jeremiah. A whirlwind doesn't answer questions. All a man can do is track it to the place it touches down.

They covered 12 long blocks in seconds. That was how it seemed to Brady. They were making silly jokes and shooting air balls at imaginary hoops and laughing all the way. Once, Brady jumped straight up and grabbed the low branch of an oak tree. He let out a fearsome Tarzan yell and chinned himself three times. The air above him shimmered gold and green.

Finally, Jeremiah stopped before the front steps of the town library. "I hope you got your howling over with," he said. "We get in there, you let me do the talking, man."

Inside, he strode up to the desk and Brady followed. "We need some art books soon as possible," Jer said. "It's an emergency."

The head librarian herself came scurrying to help, and Brady grinned at Jer in admiration. Ol' Jeremiah might be short and scrawny-looking,

Judy Odom's stories and poems have appeared often in the pages of ***Now and Then*** *and other regional journals and anthologies. She teaches English at Science Hill High School in Johnson City, Tenn.*

but he surely sounded tall.

"The modern stuff—that's what we need," Jer said to Mrs. Weaver. "You know—the stuff where nothing looks like what it's s'posed to be."

Two hours Jer and Brady sat together at a big oak table by a window. Jer kept making trips into the stacks for more art books and for encyclopedias. He gathered pictures by O'Keeffe and Jackson Pollock, by Matisse, Dali, Picasso, and Chagall. He even found a book about anonymous graffiti artists.

While Brady tried to memorize the pictures—all their blues and greens and oranges, their soaring curves and melted angles—Jer was scribbling in a little pocket notebook. He filled up 10 or 15 pages before he set his pencil down.

"Brady, look at this," he whispered, holding out what he had written.

Brady shook his head. "Let me alone."

So Jer reached over and spread both his hands across a blue Picasso. Brady rubbed his eyes like someone coming out of sunlight back into a darkened room.

"That dumb-ass Larkin dudd'n know a thing," said Jeremiah. "We gon' prove it to your mama, too," He riffled through the pages of his notebook. "I got the proof right here. Picasso and those other guys—a million bucks a picture. I'd say that made their mamas mighty proud. Today their stuff's in all the big museums. Look. It is." He showed the list to Brady. "Go check some books out now. Your favorite ones. We got some work to do."

Back at Jeremiah's house again, they shut themselves up in his bedroom. "We gon' do this scientific," Jeremiah said. He fed the information he'd collected into his computer. While the printer clacked and clattered, he explained his plan.

An hour later, they were eating peanut-butter sandwiches and drinking lemonade at Brady's kitchen table. Books were stacked up in the chair between them. "Sit down with us a minute, Mrs. Pierson," Jeremiah said. "We got some things you need to see."

Brady went through seven books. Without a word, his mother let him show her every picture. The lines between her eyes got deeper, that was all.

As soon as Brady finished, Jer unfolded his computer print-out. He discussed net worth and average price per painting and each artist's lifetime earnings and awards. He reeled off which museums owned whose pictures; then he discoursed briefly on the future of a young man entering the field of modern art today.

"The way I figure all the probabilities, it looks like Brady's sure to make it big before he's 30. Annual projected income—right around four million dollars, free and clear." Jer took his glasses off and cleaned them on his t-shirt. "Maxwell Larkin's lucky if he pulls 20 thousand. Maybe 25."

Mrs. Pierson got up from the table. "Maxwell Larkin is a genius. Far as I'm concerned, he's worth more than Picasso any day. The way I see it, trash is trash—no matter how much some fools pay to buy it." She wagged her fingers at an angular blue nude. "You hang a piece of trash like that in Radford, folks would laugh it off the wall. They surely would." She took their empty plates and glasses to the sink to rinse them. "Well," she sighed. "I tell you what—if I was that Picasso's mama—boys, I'd have to cover up my head in mortal shame."

Grimly, Jer and Brady gathered up their books and papers. They stomped up to Brady's room to sulk in private. Brady threw himself face down across his unmade bed. Standing by the open window, Jeremiah ripped his print-out into tiny pieces. Like pale green mayflies dying, they fluttered to the brown shag rug. He wandered over to the desk and picked up one book that they hadn't shown to Brady's mother. *Graffiti Art*, the book was called.

Jer slumped down in the chair and tilted back and propped his feet up on the desk top. He braced the open book against his knees. "You know, these guys are pretty good. They sure don't care about not making money. Mostly, they don't even sign their names. They use a plain ol' ordinary can of spray paint. They have to work real fast."

He stroked the picture of a Chinese dragon spread across two pages. The way the colors swirled and blended made him think of spinning tops and whirligigs and rainbow sherbet melting on a sunny afternoon.

"'Pavilion wall at Venice Beach. Los Angeles.'" He read the caption out to Brady. "Come look at this graffiti stuff. It idd'n bad. You ever paint with spray paint, man?"

Brady didn't answer. He just got up off his bed and disappeared into the closet. "Don't bother me with that. I'm busy looking for a plastic bag to stick my head in now." He swept his shirts and coats and bluejeans to the floor and rattled hangers. "I reckon maybe Ma might like my pictures better once I'm dead," he groaned.

"Sometimes it works that way," Jer mused, still staring at the dragon. "I found that out today. An artist dies—it drives his price real high. He kicks off one day—bang! Next day his grieving relatives are happy billionaires." Jer closed his eyes, but he still saw the dragon grinning at him. "Your mama dudd'n seem too interested in money, though. It's other folks in Radford—what they'll think about your crazy pictures—that's what's really on her mind."

Jer sat there for another minute, thinking. Suddenly his eyes popped open. He swung his feet down off the desk again. The front legs of his chair crashed to the floor. He pressed the dragon tight against his cheek and scrambled for the closet. "Brady? Hey, come on. Come out of that now. Come on. There idd'n any need for you to smother in a plastic bag to make your mama happy. I guarantee it this time—she's gon' be real proud when we get through."

"All right." Brady's voice came drifting out from somewhere deep inside the closet. "No plastic bags inside there anyhow." He stepped into the room again, his brown hair gray with dust and cobwebs. "It's dark in there," he said. "It's dark back in the corners. I couldn't see a thing."

Jer projected that his latest sure-fire plan would take a week of preparation. They had to gather money and materials. They had a site to choose.

Between them, they had $7.95. Jer calculated that they needed 50 dollars. "No use to do a thing at all if you can't do it big," he said.

Beginning that same afternoon, they went to work for anybody in the town of Radford that would hire them. They mowed at least two dozen lawns and

trimmed what seemed like 20 miles of shrubs. They scrubbed unending kitchen floors, washed dishes by the hundreds, and waxed and polished every car that wasn't locked away in a garage. In desperation, they returned coke bottles for deposits. By Friday, they had earned exactly $53.19.

That afternoon and early the next morning, Jer and Brady each paid separate visits to those stores in town that carried spray paint. Jer insisted that they only buy two cans in every place.

"Some kid walks into K-Mart and wants 20 cans of spray paint in assorted colors, people gon' start asking questions, Brady. You prepared to tell 'em what you want it for?"

All week in what free time they had, they'd gone bike riding in the business district. "It's gotta be some place you won't be bothered while you're working. But it's also gotta be some place that everybody's sure to see. That's real important," Jeremiah said.

From several possibilities, they finally picked out a vacant store down on the corner of East Main and Wilson. The building had a lovely smooth gray side that faced on Wilson Avenue.

Jer ran another program on his IBM to analyze the traffic patterns. "Sundays after 10 p.m.," he said. "That's when it's safest for us, Brady. Reckon you can manage to sneak out tomorrow night?"

"You know it, Jer. No problem. Out the window. Down the maple tree."

Escaping from his room was even easier than Brady had expected. He rode his bike into the alleyway behind the building a few seconds after 10:00. As he was putting down the kickstand, Jeremiah stepped out from behind a dumpster. "You can't leave your bike there, Brady. Gotta hide it better. Roll it on back here with mine." Jer slipped his knapsack off his shoulders then and offered it to Brady. "Here's my part of your colors, man."

Brady carried Jeremiah's knapsack and his own out to the narrow strip of grass between the building and the sidewalk. He set the knapsacks down and knelt beside them all alone. While Jeremiah walked patrol to watch for cars and joggers, Brady carefully removed the spray cans. He arranged them on the concrete in a double line. "Reds and purples here," he muttered. "Blues and greens and oranges together. Mauves and pinks and golds and aquas over there."

One thing remained to do. He whistled softly—"Yellow Submarine"—the signal they'd agreed on. Jeremiah came to join him, and together they dragged three abandoned wooden crates out of the alleyway. They stacked them up to make a stair-step platform. "I wish we coulda brought a ladder," Brady said. "There wadd'n any way to do it—not that I could see."

His preparations finished, Brady backed into the center of the street and gazed up at the empty wall before him. Uncertainly, he rubbed his palms dry on his jeans. There wasn't any use in hesitating any more. Brady grabbed three cans of paint and mounted his ramshackle tower. The time had come to glorify his name. Tomorrow, every citizen of Radford would be raving. Already, he could see the proud tears gleaming in his mother's eyes.

You've never used spray paint before or worked on anything this big, he told himself. So keep it simple.

He pulled the top off scarlet red and pressed the button down. High up in the center of the wall, he traced a great lopsided circle. Rapidly, he filled it in. Complete, the circle seemed to pulsate in the dim glow of the street lights. Brady knew it for a splendid silent sun.

Concentric circles of new light began to form around this sun that he'd created. They radiated outward—orange, yellow, pink, and soft magenta, lavender and mauve and rose. They spread until they reached the outer edges of the wall; their bright rings flooded every square inch of its surface. Brady half expected them to ripple out into the black night air and wash the shadows from the ground.

Now, seven tapered silhouettes emerged like swimmers rising from a strange prismatic ocean. Each one balanced on a separate wave and lifted his right arm above his head. The blue came first, then violet and green and aqua, white and gold and burning copper. Every figure held a silver planet spinning on his index finger like a basketball.

Brady tossed away the empty silver paint can, and it landed on the grass with all the others. He realized his arm was aching, and the fingers of his right hand didn't want to close. His legs were stiff from so much climbing up and down. He stretched and rubbed his eyes and looked around for Jeremiah. In all his life, he'd never felt so tired or so wonderful.

"Hey, man," Jeremiah whispered from somewhere behind him. "Those guys up there—those spirits or whatever—they're all me."

"Who else?" smiled Brady. He kept his back to Jeremiah.

Moving quickly, Jer and Brady gathered all the empty cans and stashed them in the dumpster. They lugged the wooden crates into the alley and put them back exactly where they'd been. Before they separated for the night, they shook hands solemnly, like men who've seen each other through some perilous adventure.

"It's beautiful. Your mama's bound to love it," Jeremiah said. "I bet they interview you on TV. Hell—they might even turn this place into the Brady Pierson Modern Art Museum. I mean—nobody's using it for anything."

He rode off on his bike down Wilson Avenue, and Brady watched him disappear into the shadows. His own way home lay west on Main. He pushed his bike out of the alleyway and stood there for a minute looking at the wonder he'd created. Brady wished that he could wait around to see it in the first light of the rising sun. But it was nearly 4 a.m. He had to be at home before his mother wakened. If she found him missing and came searching for him, she'd be too upset to see the love and glory in his grand surprise.

Pedaling through the dark streets, Brady tried to figure out some phoney reason he would give his mother for a morning drive down Main to Wilson. He wanted her to see his painting for the first time unprepared. He couldn't think of one excuse she wouldn't find suspicious. Any time that he was hiding something, his mother always knew.

First thing tomorrow, he would have to call up Jeremiah. Jer would surely have a plan. Brady hoped it would involve some TV cameras and a large applauding crowd of Radford's most distinguished citizens.

It turned out Brady got his wish—at least in part—but Jeremiah didn't make it happen. Brady never even got the chance to call him for advice. A man who wakes

up with the lightning crashing all around him doesn't have the time for talking on the telephone.

The first sight Brady saw next morning was his mother standing at his bedside. One look at her, and he could tell that she knew everything. The lines between her eyes were deeper than he'd ever seen them. Whatever she was feeling, Brady knew it wasn't pride.

He thought about escaping, then remembered he was only wearing his pajamas. His bluejeans were still lying where he'd left them on the floor. Desperately, he calculated whether there might be a chance of grabbing them and scooping up his Nikes, and then diving through the window screen into the maple. If Jeremiah had been with him, Brady might have tried. But all alone, he knew he wouldn't have sufficient luck or speed or diving power. He groaned and tried to cover up his head.

His mother wouldn't let him do it, though. She snatched the sheet and blanket off him. "Get dressed, Brady. Now," she said. "There's a policeman downstairs wants to see you 'bout some art work. He says somebody recognized your style."

His mother bent down then and seized him by the shoulders. She tugged him out of bed and got him standing on the floor. "I told that nice policeman you were home all night and sleeping, Brady. I see now I was wrong. Look at your hands."

He spread them out palms down and stared in fascination at the mix of colors. For a minute, he could almost see another painting, but reluctantly he put that thought aside. One thing he'd learned about graffitti art work—the artist should wear rubber gloves.

His painting made the local news on Channel 5 that night. They even put a color picture of it in the *Radford County Herald*. In a day or two, some art professor came to see it all the way from Birmingham.

The preacher at Hosanna Baptist looked upon it as a revelation. In his Sunday morning sermon, he declared the Lord Himself had given Brady the design. "The universe is one," the Reverend Hawkins thundered. "Jehovah balances each whirling planet in His mighty hand."

To give the citizens of Radford credit, some folks liked the picture purely for its form and color. Friends and strangers both called Brady's mother on the phone and told her it was beautiful. But there were others who considered it a desecration. They claimed that picture was a deadly sin. They said the whole state must be thinking Radford had a ghetto right downtown.

His mother listened with politeness to both factions, but for days she kept her own opinion dark. Morning, noon and nighttime, Brady felt her sad eyes on him. He couldn't draw a single picture for wondering what his punishment would be.

Considering that Maxwell Larkin's patron Carter Mays turned out to be the owner of that vacant building, Brady got off easy. Carter could've had him locked away forever in the juvenile detention hall like Maxwell had advised. Instead, he settled for financial restitution. Brady had to promise he would do odd jobs around the cotton mill. He had to earn $200 for sandblasting and watch a crew scour his painting off the wall.

The morning they were scheduled to remove his painting, Brady's mother took him on a solemn drive down Main to Wilson. They swung by Jeremiah's house, and brought him, too. She parked across the street from Carter's building. The work crew was already there. A crowd had started gathering. "I want the two of y'all to watch your mischief disappear and think about your future. Misery always comes to breakers of the law."

She got out of the car, and Jer and Brady followed slowly. "Boys," she called, "please shoo these folks away so I can get a decent view." She opened her purse. "I brought the Instamatic. We gon' need some photos for your scrapbook, son. Even if it was illegal, you did a real fine job." She ruffled Brady's hair. "I reckon Maxwell Larkin's not the only artist in this town."

Brady smiled, and Jeremiah clapped him on the shoulder. Together, they raced off to part the crowd.

Jacob's Butterfly Tree

Honeysuckle sways
brought low
by the featherweight
of Swallowtail and Grand Monarch.

He picks them
like berries,
lays them in my cupped hands
where they shimmer
and lift—
jewels having grown wings.

Carried by the wind
the feel of them remains,
a gift of color
and summer light.

—Charlotte H. Deskins

Charlotte Deskins is a freelance writer/cartoonist whose comic strip, "Fescue," appears in the ***Virginia Mountaineer.*** *She lives in Pounding Mill, Va.*

Photo by Alice Anthony

Walk Through the Woods

by Barbara Smith

Her father had insisted that Ellen go for a walk with him. He had shown up early that morning, his gray hair shining, his light brown eyes penetrating her depression.

"Oh, Dad," she had said, "I really don't feel like—"

"Yes, you do. We're going," he had insisted, and she had argued no further, responding as she had when he had used the same tone, the same straight-backed posture when she had resisted at 10 years old, at 14, even at 20. He smiled now at his fully grown off-spring. "Honey, I know it's been rough." They were both thinking of her alcoholic father-in-law who lived there with Ellen and her husband. "But we won't talk about it."

Ellen looked up, her brown hair sliding back over her shoulders. "Promise?"

"Yes." Patient before her, her father folded his hands in front of his belt, waiting. "There are a number of things I'd like to say, but I won't."

She stood, pushing her coffee cup to the middle of the table, hiking her jeans up with her left hand. She sighed. Her head ached again. "I really ought to stay and clean up—"

"No, you shouldn't. You should get out of here for a while." His hand took her elbow firmly. "I'll help you with the dishes when we get back."

"Dad," Ellen crushed a paper napkin between her fingers, leaning toward the softness of her father's sweatered arm. "I'm afraid to leave the house when he's—"

"Nonsense!" the old man insisted. "He won't do anything except perhaps get sick." He laughed shortly. "At least he doesn't smoke, so he's not going to burn the house down."

Ellen smiled. "That's some consolation." She sighed again.

"Come on," her father ordered. "And bring your pencils and paper."

"What?"

"Pencils and paper—pad, whatever it is. The things you use to draw with."

Her mouth relaxed. "That's a good idea, you old phoney—if only I knew where they were."

In the dining room buffet. I saw them when I was getting the silverware out last Sunday."

"Really?" Now she was excited. "That's a good idea." She tiptoed into the dining room, hoping that her father-in-law's bedroom door would stay closed. He seemed a little better lately. Maybe.

The paper and pencil were there. She took them.

The two of them walked out the back door, across the sunlit yard, climbing over the fort that the boys had stacked up, maneuvering around the neglected shrubs. Then across the blacktopped road and up into the woods. They walked, not talking, smiling together as a chipmunk dashed around their feet, as a fat old bluejay scolded their intrusion. "Beautiful day, dear, her father said once.

"Yes," she said.

"The leaves are turning early this year," he said.

"Too early," she answered.

"Beautiful day," he said.

Then, "Why aren't you at the office?" she asked.

"I took the day off."

Finally they reached the middle, surrounded by stillness and clean-tasting air. "Now," her father said.

"Now, what?" Ellen asked.

"Now you stay and I go on," he said. "I'm going to walk on up the ridge for a while, and you're going to stay here and draw."

She looked around. "Draw what?"

"It doesn't matter. Just draw." He turned to go, then changed his mind. "Almost forgot." He reached into his deep sweater pocket, and in his hands lay two apples, one Milky Way, and one Hershey with almonds. "Take your pick," he said.

Ellen blinked against the stinging in her eyes. "Oh, Dad," she said, a little girl again.

"Take your pick—one of each," he said. She did, and he was gone, striding through the underbrush as if on his way to see the President.

Ellen watched him go, then looked around. She turned twice, daring herself to find something in this very spot to draw. It would be fun not to move from where her father had deposited her. And then she remembered another time when she had been deposited—that time at a shoeshine stand when she had been about five years old and had gone to her father's office with him and he had been disgusted with the condition of her brown leather oxfords. He had marched her downstairs from his ordered office, to the corner beyond his building, to a black man with a mile-high shoeshine stand. She had been lifted onto the seat. "Stay here," her father had commanded. "I'll be back in a few minutes." And she had stayed and stayed and stayed, tears coming closer and closer and finally arriving, the black man with the big white smile teasing, then comforting, then wondering himself. And finally, finally, her father had come back, laughing. "Got almost home," he reluctantly admitted. "I'm not used to having pretty little girls with me at the office." And she, still sobbing, had hardly been able to believe he still loved her.

Ellen found something to draw—an old stump with a hole knee-high from the ground, that hole filled with a floor of acorns. She sat down in the leaves at its base, beginning to draw upward. "Chipmunk's eye-view," she thought, and for a while it went well, the old tree and Ellen, until she heard a sound inside, or maybe inside—a movement of something somewhere—and it sounded like another inside—the inside of a dark, smelly bedroom in her house. The drawing went bad, the lines now stiff and wrong.

She stood, whispering to herself. "Come on—forget it!"

She walked around the tree, looking for another, more lively thing to draw. Then back to the tree. The hole. She started to draw again, this time crouched close, looking down into the almost-black pit, inside which she could see the round little nuts, their caps tipped in all directions. "Squirrel's eye-view," she thought, and again she drew, again going well, the whole picture being the hole and its stomach-boggling contents. But the more she drew, the darker the hole became, and she began to have trouble differentiating acorns from darkness. More trouble, more darkness. The nuts now looked rotten and deformed. The drawing was ruined.

She signed, standing to stretch her legs, hoping to hear her father returning. She turned and looked. No sign. "Once more—come on, kid, once more," she told herself. This time she did choose another subject, a small holly bush growing volunteer and almost hidden in the mass of newly fallen maple leaves. She liked the greenness of it there amid the brown, the life of it, stubborn, and she sat down close, just looking for a while, hugging her knees and not thinking. Then she made the pencil start again, the five-pointed leaves, the twiggy stems, more leaves, more stems, and exactly seven tiny berries that promised a future. It was a good bush. She began then on the background, the leaves lying jumbled and dry around the shrub. Background, one leaf, another. Background. But they were taking over, the masses of dead leaves, each leaf which had once been alive and separate, life-and-shade-giving.

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now smothering and dead. Smothering and serving only eventually to oxidize, decay, disappear, become absorbed—eventually—into other life. And finally she couldn't see the holly at all. The inside of her head felt funny. She reached out, her eyes blurred, for the seven-berried holly bush. Her vision cleared as the top of her middle finger met the end of a prickly leaf. Into her mind flashed the picture of blood-taking, blood-letting—the antiseptic, professional squeezing until the blood came.

She took hold of that leaf and squeezed it, pulling steadily, steadily and slowly, until the twig let go. The leaf was caught between the right thumb and forefinger, and she squeezed it until the blood came by itself. Then she pushed the second point into her right index finger, pushed until more blood came. Then her third finger on the third point, her fourth finger on the fourth point, and finally her little finger on the last point, this time stabbing deep and deeper until the blood came, and still deeper until the tears also came. She crumpled the leaf then, crushing it between her two hands, its sharpness scratching both her palms until the sharpness and the leaf were gone, leaving only a small pulpy mass and a light green stain. And then she cried, her face in the holly-smeared hands, her body rocking as she sat there on the ground. She cried, hugging herself with both arms, holding onto the crushed holly leaf as if it were a stillborn fetus. The only sound she heard was her own sobbing, her lost-little-girl sound.

Then it was over. First she took from her pocket a neatly folded piece of kleenex with which she wiped her face and hands. Then she stood, brushing from her jeans the fragments of brittle leaves which in her grief she had gathered unto herself. Then she took a deep breath, straightening her back and pulling down her sweatshirt. Then she picked up a stick from near the disastrous stump and began to dig in the soft loam, a tiny hole at first, and then a bigger one. Slightly bigger, just a little more. Then she turned back to where she had been sitting in front of the holly bush and picked up her sketch pad and her pencil. From the pad she tore first the chipmunk drawing, then the squirrel hole, and finally the holly bush. She folded each one separately, as small and tight as she could. As each one was folded, she placed it in the hole she had dug. The first picture, the second, the third. Then she bent to pick up the little green blob which had been the holly leaf. She put it, too, into the hole. Then she took the stick and scraped the moldy earth back into the opening, covering the papers and the leaf.

Smiling slightly, Ellen tore a corner from a clean sheet of the sketch book, and on that scrap she wrote, "Ellen Walters—Another Abortive Attempt." The scrap she punctured with the stick, and the stick she shoved into the soft earth, leaving both to mark the grave.

Her timing was perfect. She straightened up, brushing her hands on her pants, then wiping them with the spotted kleenex. Her father was coming, his steps crackling through the leaves behind her. She stuffed the kleenex down into the earth with the drawing, a hasty burial of the last vestige, then neatly gathered together the sketch pad and the pencil and the apple and the candy bar, packaging them into the bend of her arm and turning quickly to meet her dad.

"Hi, honey," he said, waiting as she came toward him through the trees.

"Hi," she said.

"Have fun?" he asked.

She stumbled. "Sort of," she said.

He put his arm firmly around her shoulder. "Now wasn't it good to get away for a while? Aren't you glad we came?"

Ellen turned her face toward him, and inside herself she could feel walls crumbling. She looked away again, digging her fingernails into her still-sticky palms. She swallowed hard and took a deep breath, restructuring all the barricades she could. Then she smiled. "Yes, Dad," she said.

brown whiskey for a blue heart

my hurt heart ain't through

healing

it ain't aged enough

yet

it's into over

indulgence

incurring brand new

debt

the drunker i

drink

the less i

forget

by morning i'm

soaked

in soured memory's

sweat

—Marty L. Silverthorne

Marty Silverthorne received a masters degree from East Carolina University. He has won a chapbook competition for ***Dry-Skin Messiah*** *and has been published in* ***St. Andrew's Review***, ***Pembroke***, ***The Rebel. Roanoke Roots***, *and others.*

Reviews

Stereoscopic Perspective:
Reflections on American Fine and Folk Art
by Michael Hall

Contemporary American Art Critics, No. 11
Donald Kuspit, series editor
UMI Research Press
Ann Arbor, 1988
$39.95 (hardcover)

Douglas Day

Folklorists have traditionally been pitted against art collectors and museum curators in debates over the definition and description of folk art. UMI Research Press has in recent years published important work on folk art written by folklorists such as Michael Owen Jones, Simon Bronner and John Vlach. Now, as part of its Contemporary American Art Critics series, UMI has published a collection of essays by Michael Hall, a contemporary sculptor and instructor at Cranbrook Academy and folk art collector.

Hall's initial attraction to folk art was as a way to revitalize his own work—to reaffirm in his sculpture the values of community and social affirmation he found in his readings of folk art. Though squarely in the camp of fine art and academia, Hall's viewpoint is far from the mainstream of thought on folk art among his colleagues. He is almost alone in that he takes a critical, historical perspective, seeing the ways that American elite culture has imposed and manipulated its own privileged definitions of "the folk" and "folk art" in the 20th century.

The folkloristic and anthropological view of folk art starts, at least in theory, from the native perspective. The meaning of folk artistic expression, whether it is verbal, musical, ritual or material, resides in the context of its original performance. Folklorists and anthropologists pay careful attention to important details: Who is the performer? What is the performer's relationship to the audience? When, where and under what circumstances do traditional performances take place? What commonly held beliefs does the folk art express or challenge?

Diametrically opposed is the school of thought, typically expounded by art collectors and museum curators who impose meaning on folk art solely from the outside, ignoring its original context. The same impulse which led early expressionists to wrest African ritual statuary from its original context—its local culture— strip it of feathers, earth and blood, and place it on a well-lit pedestal in an urban museum also led American folk art collectors to strip the paint off antique duck decoys—the better to reveal essential form. Those artists who first "discovered" folk art in the 1920s were American expressionists who concentrated on finding meaning in pure form as they tried to establish an American artistic identity apart from the European.

The essays in *Stereoscopic Perspective* span a period between 1976 and 1986. Hall, in several of these essays, gives a clear historical account of the political and ideological manipulation of American folk art, of how folk art has been "peculiarly abused and made to serve many masters." While Hall's essays are largely theoretical, they are also richly descriptive. A few were originally written for exhibit catalogues. Unfortunately, there are far too few photographs accompanying the essays, and it's often frustrating not to see some of the works Hall is describing. These complaints are with the series' editor, though, and not with the content of Hall's arguments.

Hall has appropriated some of the main paradigms of modern folkloristics—especially the emphasis on context and local meaning and on the communication processes. The development of Hall's thinking points to a convergence or reconciliation of viewpoints between folklorists and collectors. However, had these essays been arranged chronologically, discerning the evolution of Hall's thought would have been far easier.

His first essay, "American Sculpture on the Culture Mobius," is especially noteworthy for its attempts to break down some artificial and unnecessary distinctions between "high and low culture" which have accrued in the past three-quarters of a century. He counters the argument that folk art is somehow the opposite of academic art. All art is ultimately vernacular, Hall asserts. Art is "belief, idea and social value invested in plastic form," no more or less in elite urban academia than in the local, traditional small community. The modernist stereotype of the "isolated artistic genius conjuring forms and images from nothing" is itself a socially constructed myth. Meaning resides in the context: "If art is a communication built on a visual framework, then an assertion or a statement that an artist might give form to would derive its meaning from the beliefs and perceptions common to the culture of which the artist is a part."

Hall has not completely "crossed over," though. Even in the latest of Hall's essays, he sometimes ascribes values and attributes to folk art based on his own perceptions rather than on any conversations with the folk artists themselves.

One of the criticisms Hall levels is at the current fashionability of the so-called "outsider," "isolate" or "visionary" folk artist. The "gonzo journalism" school of art criticism which is currently aimed at idiosyncratic folk artists betrays a fixation on certain qualities of "the raw, the untamed and the explosive," which are, again, imputed by the observer rather than clearly intended by the artist. Critics can only begin to reveal meaning when they base their analyses on the elicitation of the folk artists' own aesthetic in the context of their culture as represented by the community whose language and values inform his own and who are his primary audience.

While it is true that only one of Hall's essays specifically deals with an Appalachian artist, woodcarver Edgar Tolson, the other articles should prove of interest to anyone who is interested in the subject of folk art and the politics of culture. Hall's arguments, coming as they do from the elite circles of academic fine art and art collecting, are particularly welcome and stimulating. Few academic artists since Kandinsky have been as articulate and forceful in their criticism. I can recommend this book to artists, to people who think about art in society and to all students of culture in American regions.

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Reviews

Craft & Community: Traditional Arts in Contemporary Society

Edited by Shalom D. Staub

Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies and the Pennsylvania Heritage Affairs Commission
Philadelphia, 1988
$20.00 (paperback)

Richard Blaustein

Craft & Community: Traditional Arts in Contemporary Society was published as the catalogue of a touring exhibition of Pennsylvania crafts jointly sponsored by the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies and the Pennsylvania Heritage Affairs Commission, but it does more than simply provide background information concerning an interesting and highly diversified collection of artifacts from various sections of the Keystone State. With thoughtful, well-written essays by editor Shalom Staub and a team of folklorists and cultural anthropologists including J. Joseph Edgette, Thomas E. Graves, John Reynolds, Doris J. Dyen, Malachi O'Connor, Sally Peterson and Susan L.F. Isaacs, this publication touches upon fundamental issues concerning the meanings, functions and values of these forms of material culture in the lives of modern people.

As Shalom Staub is quick to point out, not all of the artifacts discussed and presented here are necessarily "folk" or "traditional" according to older classical usage of these terms. None, however, is "fine art" either (in the sense of being manifestations of the aesthetic values of a socially and economically dominant group or the result of formal academic tutelage in elite institutions patronized by such an establishment). The focus here is on the interrelationship between craftspeople, the items they produce, and the instrumental and expressive functions of these crafts within the communities they serve.

Interestingly, the definitions of "community" vary from case to case. For the most part we are dealing with the sorts of traditional community patterns that most old-school folklorists can feel comfortable with, even if the specific craft items or the methods entailed in their production are not of ancient and anonymous origins. Manufacturers of funerary art, like the Wood Family of Delaware County studied by Edgette, or the various makers of ethnic musical instruments documented by Reynolds, Dyen and O'Connor, feel free to incorporate innovations into the production of their artifacts. These innovations improve technical quality, and the work continues to satisfy the needs of their neighbors or fellow ethnics. In a subtle and understated fashion, the same holds true of the Amish craftspeople studied by O' Connor who produce buggy parts and clothing for co-religionists who readily accept novel materials and manufacturing techniques as long as traditional patterns are replicated.

By contrast, we find a greater degree of quasi-ritualistic constraint in the work of the Cherokee maker of dance costumes and paraphernalia. This craftsperson's clientele mainly consists of members of Eastern Woodland tribes in and outside Pennsylvania whose aboriginal lifestyles have long since deteriorated but who nonetheless feel the need periodically to express their affinity with those idealized primordial communities through donning ancient costumes and reviving traditional dance and music.

It is hard to see any significant difference between such a romantic revivalist craftsperson and the hex sign painters and makers of incised Pennsylvania German redware pottery discussed by Graves and Isaacs. These artisans are essentially producing "nostalgia symbols" for people who may or may not possess organic ties with the communities to which they have developed emotional and aesthetic attachments. Who indeed is to say that cultural relationships based on affinity are any less legitimate than those based on kinship and proximity?

It is to the credit of these scholars that they have not permitted themselves to be intimidated by the great folkloristic bugaboo, Authenticity, but have nonetheless given serious attention to the complex actualities of modern folk revivalism and tourist art. Though only a limited proportion of the material presented in this collection of essays directly relates to Appalachia, many fruitful parallels can nonetheless be drawn to the historical development of the crafts movement and folk revivalism in this region. Carefully prepared and attractively presented, this volume merits the serious attention of the folklorist, cultural historian or Appalachianist. Highly recommended.

Richard Blaustein is a folklorist and director of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services at East Tennessee State University.

The Arts at Black Mountain College

by Mary Emma Harris

The MIT Press
Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1987
$50.00 (hardcover)

Blair White

After being dismissed as a professor of classics from Rollins College in Winter Park, Fla., John Andrew Rice along with a few other unemployed colleagues founded Black Mountain College in 1933 near Asheville, N.C. In the years that followed, Josef and Anni Albers, Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning and Walter Gropius were a few of the names associated with this college located in the mountains of western North Carolina. It was an experimental school that placed the arts at the core of its curriculum. Even for beginning students, art was the most important course. Black Mountain College changed the course of the arts in America and the rest of the art world.

Mary Emma Harris chronicles this change in the American arts movement in her book, *The Arts at Black Mountain College*, published by The MIT Press. Harris spent 16 years researching, interviewing students, staff and faculty and locating works produced at the college for

this book. These efforts are well documented with more than 50 pages of notes, faculty and student rosters and a detailed bibliography. Perhaps the material is a bit overworked, but it does provide a complete portrait of this experimental college that offered no academic credits, conferred no degrees and was not accredited.

Laced throughout the pages of text are the works of both faculty and students, confronting the reader with names and glimpses of individuals who have shaped and driven the world arts movement. These illustrations and writings are supplemented with photographs taken at the college during its 24-year history.

Throughout its brief life, Black Mountain College was beset with financial difficulties. Initial funds to open the college were raised during the Great Depression with the bulk of the $14,500 funding donated by Mr. and Mrs. J. Malcolm Forbes. The spirit of activism and idealism of the 1930s was replaced with the social and political conservatism of the 1950s, and Black Mountain College's "...false reputation as a Communist community did not help in recruiting students or raising money."

The FBI visited to investigate complaints, and on one occasion interrogated a faculty member as a possible spy. The suspicions this created and the subsequent loss of political idealism caused a withdrawal from social and political life. Drugs, alcohol and the lifestyle of the "beat generation," coupled with the paranoia of the time, further alienated local people as well as artists outside the community and potential supporters. Attempts to raise funds failed. The sale of land, beef cattle and even some of the college's pianos only postponed the inevitable. The college closed in September 1957 with the selling of the remaining lands to help pay its outstanding debts.

The Arts at Black Mountain College provides insight into an interesting and neglected part of Appalachia's art history. Recommended as an excellent resource.

Blair White is the curator of the Carroll Reece Museum at East Tennessee State Unversity.

The Outrageous Life of Henry Faulkner: Portrait of an Appalachian Artist

by Charles House

University of Tennessee Press
Knoxville, Tenn., 1988
$24.95 (hardcover)

John Hart

With the coming of the hippies, he finally felt for the first time like he was accepted by society and that his vision of the human spirit was catching on. Henry Faulkner, the wiry crazy blond blue-eyed Kentucky hillbilly drove down the Southern backroad in a beat-up old station wagon with 25 cats and two dogs and a 1500 pound antique house column strapped to his car, loudly singing the blues to himself while dressed in drag. It was the early 60s, and he was on his way to Florida for his annual winter escape to Key West to visit his best friend, Tennessee Williams.

Faulkner was one of the original performance artists. He was his art. The painter-poet came from a dirt poor rural Appalachian family, orphaned and shuffled from foster family to the Kentucky state children's home, to jail and back again. An extremely nervous and sickly child, he grew up being tormented by his classmates for being a sissy. Henry's solution to this chiding was to act even more outrageous. At least he got some much desired and needed attention. He continued this flamboyant behavior, dress and lifestyle for the rest of his life. He thought nothing of taking his pet goat, Alice, to a high-class uptown gallery opening and was known to be still working on one of his paintings while the first guests arrived.

Faulkner's highly conspicuous and unconventional lifestyle was no fake. He had paid hard dues. No one was a more genuine eccentric than Faulkner, the starving artist, self-taught backwoods poet-performer-vagabond-traveller.

The young Faulkner overcame a limited education by having a total commitment to the purely artistic life. This led to a most successful career. He realized at an early age that he had to be an artist. His genuine sensitivity to nature, people and animals served as a wellspring for his artistic poetic inspiration. Friends reported that many times he would halt whatever he was doing (including driving) to gaze and carry on over a flower, becoming so moved by its beauty that he would have to be restrained to keep from hurting himself. On one such occasion, after stopping to look at a flower on highway I-75, he went into convulsions, ripping off his clothes and speaking in tongues while trying to hitchhike.

Faulkner started his artistic career as a poet and then began painting. As a painter he became well known and financially successful, but toward the end of his tragically short life, it was poetry that again sustained his searching soul. At one point he was confined in the same mental hospital as Ezra Pound, and it was there he made the renowned poet's acquaintance.

As his shows became more critically successful, Faulkner traveled from one gallery opening to another. He had several extended stays in Italy, lived in Los Angeles and San Francisco, wintered in Key West and Palm Beach. But if he had to call a place home, it would have been Falling Timbers, Ky., which provided him the inspiration he needed again and again.

Charles House's book *The Outrageous Life of Henry Faulkner* is a fascinating romp through the truly outrageous life of one of the most intriguing artists of this century. He has done the reader a favor by researching the story of Faulkner's life, not an easy task as he was a most disorganized individual.

Faulkner's life and career provides a huge dose of inspiration to any aspiring artist. Despite his successes and travels, he is shown by the author to still be a unique product of his rural Appalachian upbringing, one he kept returning to throughout his life.

John Hart is a librarian at the Johnson City Public Library, a sculptor, a poet and a frequent contributor and resource to ***Now and Then****.*

Reviews

In Place
A Collection of Appalachian Writers
Edited by Ronald K. Giles

Center for Appalachian Studies and Services, Box 19180A
East Tennessee State University
Johnson City, Tenn., 37614
1988
$4.95 (paperback)

Robert Fox

The title *In Place* has more to do with representing a group of writers who meet in Johnson City than with attempting to define a local portion of Appalachia. As a result, the stories, poems and one play represent a range of writers from experienced ones who have developed authoritative voices to newcomers who are searching for their own styles.

The strongest stories are Jo Carson's "Sweet Rage" and John Morefield's "A Knocking." In Carson's story, the rage is a voice, a character who possesses Pearl Suthers, persuading her to murder her drunk son-in-law in an apparently rational act. This is difficult material which Carson handles with understatement. Her theme is a woman's instinct for survival, the protection of her abused daughter and unborn granddaughter. (Tests have shown it's a girl.)

Pearl is awakened in the night by Crystal, bruised about the face by her drunk husband who hit her in the stomach as well. It's not an isolated incident and the cycle of violence is not new. "She'd been through this before with Crystal, heard it all before. Bobby would be fine when he sobered up, and he was going to sober up; he was working on it. Pearl's ex-husband had never sobered up. Pearl...tried to make her understand what Pearl was sure she understood... 'It doesn't get better, it just gets worse!' "

The rage talks to Pearl like a person, tells her to turn off her headlights as she pulls into the driveway, tells her to pick up a heavy object. She even conducts a dialogue with it: "What now?" "Hit him, he hit Crystal."

It is not until the end of the story when Crystal confronts her mother, that the reader finally realizes that Pearl's logical act was madness. The meaning of sanity is called into questions through the reader's sympathy for Pearl.

John Morefield's "A Knocking" is a many-faceted story of frustration and the American Dream. Charles, the main character of the story, never able to accept his life as a laborer, comes to work at Akers Construction wearing old dress pants, a sports shirt, old wing-tips and a fancy, tooled belt instead of the work suits worn by the rest of the crew, except the college-educated narrator he selects as confidant.

A grade school teacher educated Charles with the one kernel of futile myth that keeps his hopes alive. "'She told me that ever man hears opportunity knockin on his door sooner or later. And when it knocks on mine I'll be there to get it.'" What Charles takes for his big chance is a request from an Army "brother" to invest in a tourist shop "down off Lookout Mountain somewhere." Charles has to borrow against all he owns, and the narrator, who knows the proposition is doomed, is unable to dissuade him. Charles is in his early 40s and never works too hard for the paternalistic boss who keeps the men on the payroll doing yard work around his house in between jobs. Charles lets himself get fired, and after losing his few possessions, hangs himself in jail with his fancy belt. While the outcome of the story is as inevitable as the change of seasons, it is rendered in authentic detail, with counterpoints and ironies. The reader realizes it is the narrator's story as well. His resignation to his own future is illustrated at the end by his purchase of several suits of work clothes.

Of the poems, which create a nice rhythm through the blocks of prose, Suzanne Clark's "Sunburst" and "Calendar" are short lyrics grounded in the earth, the first poem sensuous and explosive. Greta Hedberg's "Caught" catches and speculates about time and revelation in considering the moment a waterfall turned to ice. Don Johnson's "1946" is a moving portrait of a World War II veteran returning home to Appalachia, something especially timely in this era of Vietnam posttraumatic stress syndrome. Johnson's "Knife Swapping" plays philosophically with the casual practice: "You never know what you've got until it's too late to back out." The first of Fred Waage's two fishing poems, "Erie Shore," is mystical but not obscure. A mundane scene turns magical as the narrator's lover drowns herself. "Fishing in the Dark" is a poem of a complicated family relationship defined obliquely in a brief outing.

In Place is a satisfying collection as a whole because of the diversity of the voices, especially in the poems. Most of the stories deal with frustration, disillusionment and despair. The two humorous pieces lapse into stereotypes and cliches. The poems, however, cover a much wider and more imaginative range of experience, internal as well as external.

I had hoped for even more diversity in the collection, in the form of black and Native American experience in the region, but then I'm approaching the book as an outsider. The Center for Appalachian Studies and Services is to be congratulated for using the anthology format to nurture and promote the work of local writers, and I look forward to future collections.

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*Robert Fox is the author of a book of short stories, **Destiny News**, and two novels, **The Last American Revolution** and **Confessions of a Dead Politician**, both available from December Press. Recently he completed a long novel that ties Appalachia to the European Holocaust. He works for the Ohio Arts Council in Columbus.*

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Reviews

First and Last Words

by Fred Chappell

Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge and London, 1989

$13.95 (hardcover) $6.95 (paperback)

Jim Wayne Miller

The ordinary person "falls in love, or reads Spinoza," T.S. Eliot writes in *The Metaphysical Poets*, "and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other ...." But a poet might put the two experiences together to form a new whole, for the poet's mind "is constantly amalgamating disparate experience ...."

In *First and Last Words*, his eighth collection (four of which form the tetralogy *Midquest*), Fred Chappell continues to delight and astonish his readers by putting together disparate experiences in such a way as to create poems seamless in their texture and structure.

Chappell is simultaneously attentive to detail and to overall design not only in individual poems but also with respect to their placement within the collection. His title refers to the practice of writing prologue and epilogue poems to classic works of literature. Here Chappell extends the practice to include works of art, musical compositions and philosophical and scientific treatises. Part one contains new prologues not only to the Book of Job, the *Oresteia*, and Virgil's *Georgics*, among others, but also to Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring*. Part two, "Entr'acte," includes poems occasioned by a Reubens' drawing, *Study of a Woman With Crossed Hands*, and Vermeer's *The Astronomer*. In part three, "Epilogues," he writes epilogues not only to *The Wind in the Willows*, Einstein's *Relativity*, and Goethe's *Theory of Colors*, but also, in "Remodeling the Hermit's Cabin," to the Constitution of the United States.

Chappell's reach through time and across space is impressive. He draws on the homely particulars of his Appalachian background in the opinion prologue, "An Old Mountain Woman Reading the Book of Job":

> The veiny wrist, the knobby
> finger-joints,
> The scar-creased palm, the thumb she
> lifts to wet
> And lift the corner of the memoried
> page,
> Turning once more through Job's
> bewilderment:
> What histories are written into her
> hand...

This opening poem is followed by a prologue to the *Oresteia* which focuses on "The Watchman" who "...keeps his vigil on the roof/ Of the ruining house...." until "The murderous birth of justice has begun." The third poem ends with a description of sundown, which

> ...still draws the chickens to their
> purring roost,
> The cow to the milking stall, the farmer
> to his porch to
> watch
> Whether the soaring constellations
> promise rain.

The scene, which might be mistaken for some Appalachian valley, is from "Patience," a prologue to *The Georgics* and describes a time when "war grinds over the world and all/ Its politics..." in the Roman Empire of the first century B.C. Like Thomas Hardy's "In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations,'" Chappell's "Patience" considers what is great and small, transient and timeless.

Not categories understood apart from life-art, music, philosophy and science are approached as expressions and achievements of life, no less capable of being experienced than birdsong or a child's laughter. In "My Hand Placed on a Reubens Drawing," Chappell interprets the drawing in terms of music when he describes the *Woman with Crossed Hands* in contrast to Reubens' usual:

> Outsized orchestra of Flemish flesh,
> The tuba bellies and thighs, kettledrum
> buttocks,
> The pale blonde appoggiatura breasts,
> as
> ...chamber music, intimate
> Though a little withdrawn, modestly
> Intoning a demure contralto line.

An allusion to myth vividly describes the woman's hands:

> They emerge from the blouse-cuff—
> cascade of scribble,
> Ebullient froth of marking—
> as Venus rose
> Out of the sea from whole
> and ready as sunlight.
> The smell of earth about them,
> undertone
> Of cabbage, onion, potato,
> the branmeal loaf.

Everywhere Chappell's metaphors are bold and illuminating. "The garden is a book about the gardener," while "The gardener is a book about her garden." In "Remodeling the Hermit's Cabin," the mountain cabin to be remodeled for a Florida buyer is no mere occasion for "an epilogue to the Constitution of the United States," but a metaphor for the document. Speaking of both cabin and Constitution, Chappell concludes chillingly:

> "It looks kind of sad and busted,
> what we've done."
> I said.
> "That Florida feller will tack up
> plastic,"
> He said, "and put him in
> an ice machine,
> And have him a radar carport
> and a poodle
> He's trained to count his money.
> These modern days
> We're all a bunch of cowbirds,
> you know that?"

Chappell superb carpentry joins cabin and Constitution, percept and concept, sensation and thought. He is that particular kind of poet for whom reading Spinoza (or, in the case of "Ideally Grasping the Actual Flower" by Kant) can be just as much an experience as falling in love or shooting a wild river. For Chappell, as for the Metaphysicals, a thought is an experience that can be felt as immediate as the odor of a rose. Whether he ranges in deep or out far or, as it sometimes seems, moves in both directions at once, Chappell brings back the actual flower ideally grasped, like "one's own porch light seen from a distant planet."

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*Jim Wayne Miller's recent publications include a volume of poetry, **Brier, His Book**, and a story, **His First, Best Country**, both published by Gromon Press.*

Reviews

Lily May Ledford

Directed by Anne Johnson

A Headwaters Television Program
29 minutes, Color. 1988
Appalshop, 306 Madison Street
Box 743
Whitesburg, Ky. 41858
$29.95 videocassette

Amy Tipton Gray

The first time I watched Lily May Ledford I was with a friend who knows almost nothing about country music but who is acquainted with both Ledford's daughter, Barbara, and her granddaughter Carrie, who inherited Ledford's banjo. She was eager to see the film, as she admittedly knew very little about Ledford herself. After the tape had run its course, my friend said, "Well, if I hadn't known who Lily May was before, I still wouldn't now."

According to Bill Malone *(Country Music U.S.A.)*, Lily May Ledford is credited with having formed the first string band that featured only women performers. At 19, she spent a year with the National Barn Dance before joining John Lair's Renfro Valley Barn Dance. It was John Lair who actually organized and named the Coon Creek Girls. In addition to rechristening the two women in the band who were not named after flowers, he determined the instrumentation; Ledford, first known as a fiddle player, began, at his directive, to concentrate on the banjo. A premier musician, Ledford became known for both her hard-driving banjo style and her ballad singing. After spending nearly 20 years as a professional musician, she retired, to be rediscovered during the renewal of interest in folk music in the 1960s. Before her death, she was awarded a National Heritage Fellowship.

While Lily May Ledford surely provides those who made the film, and presumably some of those knew her, with a fitting memorial, it is a work that sadly falls short of the effort that has come to be expected of Appalshop. At best it suffers from a lack of consistency; at worst, it is disjointed and amateurish. For example, I realize it is hard to tape in a boat, but the shadow of the boom on Pete Seeger's face at the very least makes it difficult to follow one of the few solid segments of the production.

The video is constructed of a series of interviews strung together with footage from old films, old Appalshop films (the dance floor footage can also be seen in *Keep On the Sunny Side*) and shots of mountain vistas that one supposes (but is not clearly told) were significant to Ledford. While the interviews (it is tempting to call them testimonials instead) provide a level of intimacy that conventional documentary technique lacks, much that ails the production could have been cured with the addition of a narrator. What would have been lost in tone would have been compensated for in coherence.

Lily May Ledford sketches the life of the "banjo pickin' girl" without producing more than a faint outline of this fine musician. The film raises questions for which it provides no answers. Why was Lily May's granddaughter, who also plays in an all-woman band, not interviewed? Who is its intended audience? Ledford's family and friends? Fine. In that capacity, it works. The general public? The narrative line is too weak to follow clearly. Those interested in early country music, historian and fan alike? More information is packed into Malone's brief description of the Coon Creek Girls (cited above). Material that should provide concise background information, leaving space for depth of biography, keeps appearing sporadically in large chunks throughout the tape. There is no clear chronology, no story. Authorities appear with scanty captions to introduce them. Issues are presented and not addressed. Major episodes are skimmed over. (What dam did Ledford fight against? Why is she shown playing the fiddle as often as the banjo if John Lair insisted she give it up?) And what was the video's purpose? To provide a tribute? Or to inform? It is a film confused about its function.

Both times I watched the tape I found myself thinking about the film it could have been. There were certainly enough persons eager to talk about Ledford. There was certainly plenty of good music available. And there were certainly lots of film clips to include. What apparently was lacking was a coherent plan. As a long time fan of Appalshop's work, I can only hope that Lily May Ledford is a fluke, not an indication of the direction of things to come.

*Amy Tipton Gray has taught the history of country music and is the coordinator of the computerized writing center at Caldwell Community College in Hudson, N.C. A chapbook of her poetry, **The Hillbilly Vampire**, is due for release by Rowan Mountain Press on October 31. Her essay, "Eminent Domain," appeared in our last issue.*

Dreadful Memories: The Life of Sarah Ogan Gunning

directed by Mimi Pickering

A Headwaters Television Program
29 minutes, Color. 1988
Appalshop
$29.95 videocassette

Jo Carson

Sarah Ogan Gunning was born Sarah Garland into a family of 15 children, among them her brother Jim Garland (author of *Welcome the Traveler Home*, a book about the era) and her half sister, Molly Jackson, known as Aunt Molly Jackson, a songwriter and midwife. The Garlands were a singing family. Sarah, Jim, and Molly were all singers, singers in a time and a place where singing was something people did together on the front porch of an evening and none of the Garlands had much of anything else.

Sarah Ogan Gunning's story is the story of the coalfields during the Depression, a terrible chronicle of greed and fear and loss. Sarah lost her mother to pellagra, her husband to TB, which was aggravated, if not caused, by his work as a coal miner, and two children, the baby first, later, an older child, to starvation. No milk, no money, no work for a woman and neighbors who were no better off than she. A collector of folk songs, Mary

Elizabeth Barnicle, heard Sarah sing her mother's songs in Kentucky and took her to New York City to live. It was there Sarah began to write the songs of her experience. She wrote new words for old music, hard words ...

I hate the capitalist system
I'll tell you the reason why
It caused me so much
suffering
And my dearest friend to die

... the words of her experience, and she began to sing them, to meet Woodie Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Hazel Dickens, people who came to know her and respect her as an artist. It is Pete Seeger you see first in the *Dreadful Memories* tape: he speaks of his first memory of Sarah singing the song.

Pickering uses footage of Gunning in performance at Highlander and other places and a series of interviews to tell the story: Hazel Garland, Sarah's sister-in-law, knew her well and loved her, Pete Seeger worked with her, recorded her songs, Ellen Skekert was a friend. Archie Green, folklorist and labor historian, knew her and provides his special perspective on her life and work. *Dreadful Memories* is a fine and moving testament to a hard life and a slice of history coal interests would probably rather forget. It is a reminder of the realities of class, the sort of footnote whole new books come from, full of real details and real people.

Sarah Ogan Gunning never made much money from her music, and she lived in poverty or not far from it all of her life.

Her sister-in-law, Hazel, does say she died getting ready to sing a song.

Jo Carson's play, ***Daytrips****, has recently been running at the Los Angeles Theater Company.* ***Stories I Ain't Told Nobody Yet****, from Orchard Books, is a new book of her People Pieces, which she has presented widely. She is* ***Now and Then****'s poetry editor.*

Family Pictures

We sit here in your kitchen
drinking tea and looking through
a jumble of old photographs
collected from our parents' distant houses.
We give each other uncles, cousins,
boyfriends, roller skates and bikes
and birthday parties, searching every picture
for glimpses of the women we've become.
These paper images of years we did not share
give breath and body to the characters
in all the family legends we've recited.
Your father stands beside a sea wall
on the Gulf Coast, summer 1954.
Young and confident and strong,
he smiles into the camera,
but I know that soon the shadows
will begin to gather in his eyes.
I show you Aunt Ardelle,
her fingers blurring on the keyboard
of a battered upright.
There's no need for me to tell you
that it's gospel-honkeytonk she's playing
on this afternoon in 1961, before arthritis
locked the music in her hands.
Like bright squares added to a quilt,
these photographs assume their places
in this pattern you and I
are stitching carefully together,
a kinship of our own design to warm us
on the days when winter comes down dark and cold.

—Judy Odom

Music

Norman Blake is a multi-talented instrumentalist from Rising Fawn, Ga. His talent and appreciation for tone and timing comes through in his performances, both instrumentally and in the songs he composes and sings. Blake's songs are unique in that they often sound traditional, yet they always touch a contemporary heart and ear.

"Last Train From Poor Valley," was written by Blake in 1972. (It appears on The Fields of November LP, Flying Fish Records, Chicago, Nannor Music, BMI.)

I spoke with Blake about what inspired him to write "Poor Valley." The idea came, he told me, during a Johnny Cash recording session for the Johnny Cash Christmas Album. During that session June Carter Cash remarked on how she missed the train that ran through Poor Valley (Hiltons, Va.) at Christmastime.

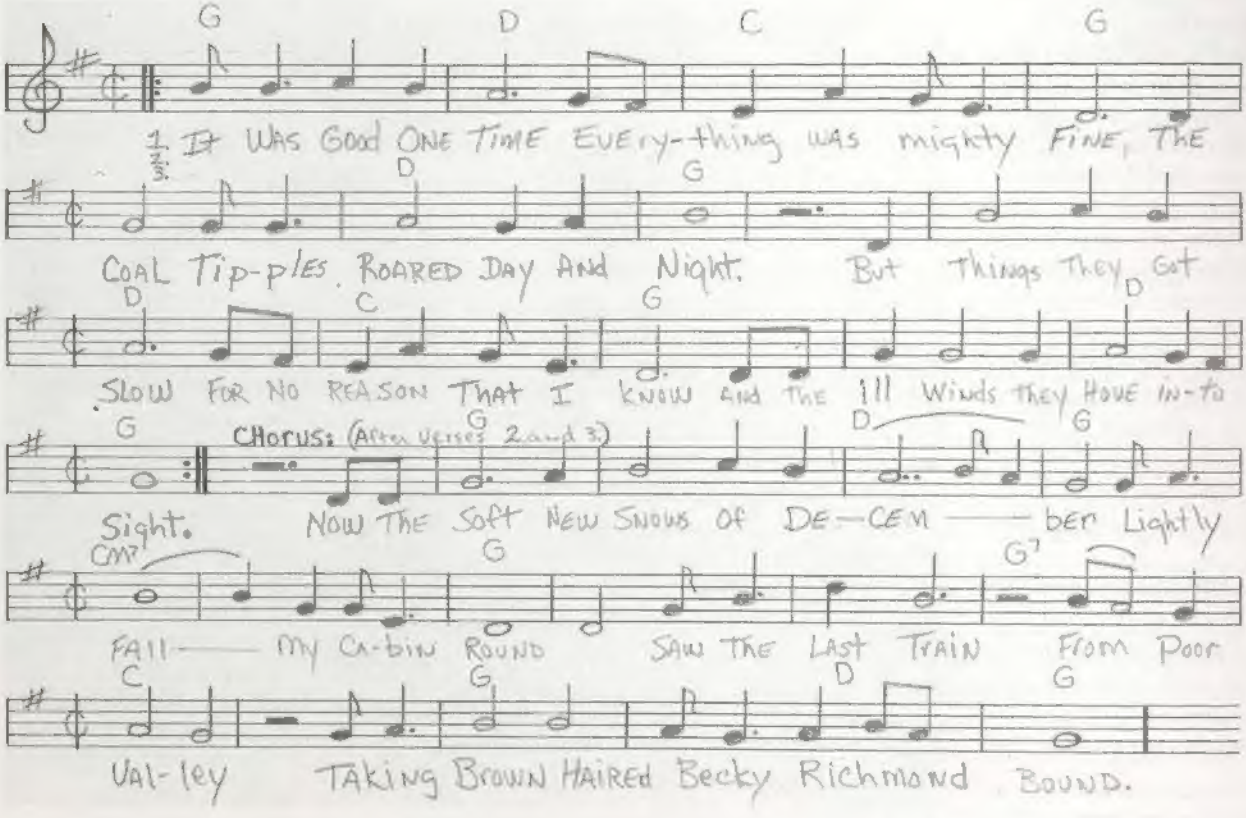
In the early days of Blake's career he performed with lots of singer-songwriters including Kris Kristofferson, John Hartford, Bob Dylan and Johnny Cash. Writers such as these inspired him to compose and perform his own songs.

"Last Train From Poor Valley" has been recorded by many folk and Bluegrass performers including the Seldom Scene and Tony Rice.

—Ed Snodderly

Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University

Last Train From Poor Valley

Norman Blake

1. It was good one time every-thing was mighty fine, the
coal tip-ples roared day and night. But things they got
slow for no reason that I know and the ill winds they have in-to
Chorus: (After verses 2 and 3)
sight. Now the soft new snows of De—cem—ber lightly
fall— my ca-bin round saw the last train from poor
val-ley taking brown haired Becky Richmond bound.

2.
Now the mine's all closed down
Everybody laid around
There wasn't very much that you could do
'Cept stand in that line
Get your ration script on time
Woman, I could see it killng you.

3.
I should blame you now
But I never could somehow
A miner's wife you weren't cut out to be
Guess it wasn't what you thought
Just some dreams that you bought
When you left your home
And ran away with me.

Chorus:
Now the soft new snows of December
Lightly fall my cabin 'round
Saw the last train from Poor Valley
Taking brown-haired Becky Richmond-bound.

Nannor Music, BMI.

Unicoi County, Tenn., still life by Mike Smith, 1989. Smith, an associate professor of art at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, has been concentrating on color photography for the past two years. He received a masters of fine arts from Yale. Two of his photographs were recently purchased by the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Back Cover:

"Guarding the Womb" acrylic on canvas, by David Riffle, Poca, W.Va., 1989, now appearing at the West Virginia Juried Exhibition in Charleston. The painting was also shown earlier this year in another exhibition in Charleston, "Where the Boys Are." Riffle graduated with a bachelor of arts from West Virginia State College Institute and has exhibited his work in the Smithsonian Institution's traveling exhibition, "More Than Land or Sky; Art from Appalachia" and in many other regional shows.

NOW AND THEN

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